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MEDITATIONS FOR LENT.

*All profits coming to the Author from the sale of
this book, will go towards the restoration of the Parish
Church of Broadwindsor.*

MEDITATIONS

FOR

every Wednesday and Friday in Lent,

ON

A PRAYER OF S. EPHRAEM;

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED SHORT HOMILIES FOR PASSION WEEK,
FROM S. CHRYSOSTOM, S. SEVERIAN, AND S. EPHRAEM.

BY THE

REV. S. C. MALAN, M.A.,

OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AND VICAR OF BROADWINDSOR, DORSET.

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive
that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that
feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."
Acts x. 34, 35.

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IN
REMEMBRANCE
OF
CHARLES MARRIOTT,
WHOSE MEMORY
IS
BLESSED.

7

1

PREFACE.



OME will, I fear, look at the title of this book, and go no further, for what good can there be in Russian Meditations on a Greek text? No doubt they are all of the Fathers; some outlandish doctrine out of date, or at least too full of error for the present day. And they will drop the book with, perhaps, a sigh of pity for its author.

Others better informed, but still prejudiced or narrow-minded, will open the book here and there, attracted by the beauty of the printing, and perhaps also, read a few lines of it. But because they find the style somewhat rugged, and they prefer lighter

religious literature, they will shut up the book, and wish it well.

Other few right-minded men, who are fair and candid enough to overlook the form for the sake of the merit it may conceal, and who are so firmly rooted and built up in CHRIST, as not to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, will open this book and read it. They will expect, of course, to find in it thoughts and expressions different from their own. But then they remember that the LORD's field is the world; that as soon as the Word was sown in this field, the enemy came and scattered about his tares of error, of infirmities, of divisions and dissensions, of sects, and even of heresies; and that all those are to grow together until the harvest; when the Reapers, —and not we men,—shall sever the weeds of the earth from the good grain that shall be kept unto life eternal. Sober-minded Christians knowing that, and waiting in patience for that day, embrace in their thoughts the whole field of the LORD; and

they rejoice to find an ear of good corn from whatever part of the field it comes, because their senses are exercised to distinguish the tares from the wheat. They do not consider the individual outward appearance, size or colour of each ear ; but look to the generic character that makes it good grain. Thus neither colour nor language, neither kindred nor race affects in any way the love those men bear to other members of CHRIST'S Church ; for in Him the Head, they claim fellowship with the whole of His Body through His Spirit. So that while they thank Him as they ought, for His having planted them where the light of His Gospel shines brightest, they yet do not withdraw themselves from infirm brethren whose eyes are dim from old age, because these cannot see clearly : but they love these older brethren for their Father's sake ; they venerate them for their long life in His service ; and they hold out to them their hand of fellowship to help and to support them ; forgiving their infirmi-

ties as they hope their own also may be forgiven them.

Men of like spirit—and such was he to whose loved memory this book is inscribed—will accept this pledge, however trifling, of union with brethren unknown; and welcome it as a messenger calling them to look beyond their own limited horizon towards the land whence arose in His glory the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. True, they will find in these Meditations no great depth of thought; but on the other hand they will find great simplicity and a genuine piety. These Meditations, simple as they are, tell us of CHRIST as of our only SAVIOUR, of His Grace, as of our only good; of His Agony and Death, as of our only merits; of His Resurrection and Ascension, as of our only hope of eternal life; and of His Intercession for us, as of our only plea with the FATHER; but not a word about what we might have expected to find, the worship or the intercession of the Virgin Mary and

of the saints on our behalf. Except one or two passages where Confession is alluded to as a sacrament, these lectures in Russian from a Greek priest in a branch of the Greek Church, contain nothing with which to find fault. This, to my mind at least, is a proof of how distinct the tares are from the wheat even while they grow together ; and how all the dross of error mixed by human hands with the pure gold of truth, never will unite with it, because it cannot. But in every nation where the Church of CHRIST is planted and His Gospel taught, earnest men slide aside as often as they can from the errors of their peculiar form, to quench their thirst at the stream of life that flows pure from the Word of GOD, which is one and the same for all.

As these Meditations¹ are on a prayer of S. Ephraem, I have inserted here and there

¹ The title of the book is : *Molitva S. Efbrema Sirina. Bescietli na Sviatuyu Tchotiredciatitsju*. Kharkoff. 1844. A Prayer of S. Ephraem the Syrian. Meditations for the Holy Season of Lent. Kharkoff. 1844. 8vo.

in smaller text, some extracts from his writings, that bear on the subject in hand ; hoping that no one will take amiss my scattering a few pearls over the pages of this book. I have also added from the same venerable author, short homilies ; one as Introduction, and others at the end of the work, for the Holy Week ; together with a homily of S. Chrysostom for Palm Sunday ; and another of S. Severian on the sufferings and death of our LORD. Thus we have here in this small volume, witnesses from the land of the sun-rising both in days of yore and at present. And although the comparison may not be in favour of the present time, yet the same simple spirit is felt throughout ; the spirit of the East, still fresh of early days, and still breathing its own life on all the earth around.

One word about my translation, for which I have little to say. Feeling how impossible it is to render fully the spirit, the ideas, the genius and idiom, nay, the

very found of the words of one language into another, for that they all are of native growth, and subject to local influence—all I have attempted is, to write in grammatical English my description of the original. When my sentences favour more of foreign than of English idiom, my readers will kindly excuse it, bearing in mind that these Meditations are a Russian, and not an English, book ; and that in proportion as they are made more English do they also lose more of their own native character, which should be preserved as much as possible, even in English words. But as to the Homilies and other extracts I have added, I can only say, that when I look at the manly, the vigorous and elegant idiom in which their great and good authors wrote them, and then at my translation, I fain would apologize to the hallowed memory of those men for having ventured to render in my own words any portion of their deep and solemn lore.

Yet if this be but one small stone in the

wall of the sacred building that is raised as a holy temple unto the LORD, may His blessing rest upon it; and may not the want of skill and ignorance of the workman who put in that stone, be remembered against him for ever.

S. C. MALAN.

BROADWINDSOR,

February, 1859.

INTRODUCTION.¹



MY soul, thou hast slumbered long enough in sin : awake, and arise from sleep ! Flee to repentance and grieve in earnest, that the Just One may have regard to thy tears.

Remove from thy thoughts the foul covering of earth that clings to them ; and look on Him intently. Let thy tears of anguish flow continually before the Judge, because of all thou hast done that is hateful in His sight. An existence of suffering

¹ Translated from the Syriac : O leki naphsho, &c. S. Ephraem ; Vol. III. p. 537.

awaits thy past actions as a just reward for all thy wickedness. Cry, oh! cry: Woe is me! Woe is me! wretched finner that I am! that the Judge may hear thee and have regard to thy tears.

Ah! wretched soul, shudder and tremble at the torments thou hast prepared for thyself! O thou, once a companion of Watchers,¹ weep and lament over thyself; for the brightness thou hadst once is now departed. Thou hast sunk deep, thou hast been overcome and laid low by lusts, and no one has brought thee out of the mire in which thou hast been lying.

Thorns and briars have choked thy better thoughts, and thou hast brought forth no fruits meet for repentance.

¹ See Dan. iv. 13, 17, 23. Watchers are an order of angels often mentioned by S. Ephraem and by other Eastern writers. In a Syriac Liturgy quoted by J. Morin in Cod. Lit. Eccl. Univ. Vol. II. p. 242, we read that Watchers are above Cherubims and Seraphims. We find them also alluded to in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, written in the first century (chap. xii.), and in the Book of Adam (p. 148), and even in the Sibylline Oracles, (a much later production), at p. 90, as *γρήγοροι ἀλφιστήρες*, &c.

Thy passions, like waves, have roared around thee, poor soul ! they have swallowed thee up like a ship in the depths of iniquity.

Thou hast never once thought of the day when all hidden things shall be searched out and made known ; and of what thou wilt do when the voice of the Bridegroom bids thee go forth and meet Him ;

When the light of thine eyes shall have gone out and perished, and thou must be left outside, among the foolish ones !

Then take oil with thee, poor wretched soul ! while it is yet time to come and be accepted. Crave the remission of thy sins, in company with the woman who was a sinner ; and let thy tears bring thee a solace for thy crimes.

Enter in, therefore, at the gate of repentance which is open to thee, and be made clean of all thine offences.

O ye sons of men that wish to inherit eternal life, have pity on the soul that must one day leave you. Accept my soul, O LORD, Thou righteous Judge ; may Thy

mercies extend over my trespasses, and deliver me from the torments I deserve. O Thou that forgiveest iniquity, and Who freely showest mercy and pity, remit my foul her many sins, in Thy just judgment ; when the lost ones whom Thou hast gathered and brought to repentance shall praise Thee for ever. Amen.

The eleventh and last Meditation is intended for the sixth Wednesday, and not for the sixth Friday, in Lent, as stated by mistake at p. 165. Besides this, a few other errors may have crept in unawares ; all of which I hope my readers will forgive.—S. C. M.

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MEDITATION I.

FOR THE

First Wednesday in Lent.



MEDITATION I.

FOR THE

First Wednesday in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, KEEP FROM ME A SPIRIT OF IDLENESS, OF DISCOURAGEMENT, OF AMBITION, AND OF IDLE TALK.

“AND GIVE ME THY SERVANT A SPIRIT OF TEMPERANCE, OF HUMILITY, OF PATIENCE, AND OF LOVE.

“YEA, LORD AND KING, GRANT ME TO SEE MY OWN TRANSGRESSIONS, AND NOT TO JUDGE OR BLAME MY BROTHER ; FOR THOU ART BLESSED FOR EVERMORE. AMEN.”



It is not without good reason, brethren, that this prayer, so well suited to the holy season of Lent, is used repeatedly in our Divine Service. Such is, doubtless, the intention of our Holy Church ; because, however short this

prayer be, it contains a rich store of holy thoughts and feelings, at the same time that it expresses clearly our spiritual wants. We shall, therefore, aid the purpose of our Holy Church, and contribute to our own spiritual edification, if we make this prayer the subject of our meditations, and consider every request put forth in it. By so doing we shall have set in array before us a whole band of virtues, with which it behoves every one to adorn his soul; while at the same time we shall discover a number of hidden sins and vices, against which every man ought to guard his own heart.

Moreover, it is not only probable, but even acknowledged by many, that this prayer is of S. Ephraem the Syrian.

This prayer, which is called ‘the prayer of S. Ephraem,’ is found in the midnight service of the Greek Church, (*Ὡρολόγι. τὸ μέγα*, Edit. Ven. p. 19), from whence it has been reprinted in the 3rd Vol. of S. Ephraem’s works, in Greek and Latin, published at Rome in 1746, p. 523. The original of it is:

Κύριε καὶ Δέσποτα τῆς ζωῆς μου, πνεῦμα ἀργίας, περιεργίας, φιλαρχίας, καὶ ἀργολογίας μὴ μοι δῶς

Πνεῦμα δε σωφροσύνης, ταπεινοφροσύνης, ὑπομονῆς,
καὶ ἀγάπης χάρισαί μοι τῷ σῷ δούλῳ·

Ναί, Κύριε Βασιλεῦ, δώρησαί μοι τοῦ ὄραν τὰ ἐμὰ
πταίσματα, καὶ μὴ κατακρίνειν τὸν ἀδελφόν μου· ὅτι
εὐλογητὸς εἰ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· Ἀμήν.¹

As a further proof of it, we should say, that S. Ephraem is one of the greatest champions of religion that have adorned their own ancient Christian Church. He was a man in the flesh, but in spirit and in perfections he was an angel. When still quite young, S. Ephraem renounced the

¹ The translation of this prayer given at the head of this Meditation, is not, however, from the Greek original, but from the Slavonic, which does not render the Greek correctly in one or two instances. Thus it renders *περιεργία* (*περιέργεια* ed. Rom.) by *uninie*, with which it has nothing to do. For the Greek word as explained by Theophrastus, (Char. xiv.), Plato, and Aristotle, (Poet. 26, 6,) means 'overmuch care in work, fuss or officiousness;' whereas the Slavonic term, which serves as text to the third Meditation, means 'dejection, loss of moral courage.' The word *σωφροσύνη* is also rendered in the Slavonic by *tšelomudrie*, which means only 'chastity.' I have, however, rendered it here by 'temperance,' according to the meaning of *σωφροσύνη*, as being more comprehensive than 'chastity,' which is implied in the Greek term.

Lastly, I have rendered *μὴ μοι δῶς, ne dajd' mi*, by 'keep from me,' instead of 'do not give me;' an expression which in English does not appear so suitable as the other.

world, and grew up in the solitude whither he had retired, and where he remained a long time, until he became, without instructors, a Teacher of the East, and a light for the whole world, through his meditations and exhortations, which had their origin in repentance.

“Let thy last hour when it comes, see thee at work in repentance, and may death find thee firm and striving like a man after holiness. Then unto the end endure thou the good fight of faith; and the race of thy life will end in a crown of righteousness.”¹

The Syrian Church to which he belonged by birth, found everything in him—a teacher of the Faith; a reformer of morals; a support in time of distress or famine; a wonderful healer of sicknesses; and a bulwark against heretics and heathens.² So that he was held in such universal reverence that even during his life, his exhortations

¹ Bpulhonok datyovuto ut. S. Ephraem, Exhort. ii. p. 376.

² See Acts of S. Ephraem, throughout, Vol. III. of his works in Syriac and Latin, fol. Rome, 1743, p. xxiii. seq. and his own account of his conversion, in Vol. III. of his works in Greek and Latin, fol. Rome, 1746, p. xxiii. seq.

were read in churches, immediately after Holy Scripture.

It was then from so great a mind that the prayer we are going to contemplate did flow ; from a mind enlightened from above ; from a heart burning with love for God and for man, and wholly purified and sanctified by the grace of God.

But S. Ephraem is in his prayer, as he was in his soul and in daily life—simple and artless. He prays himself, and calls upon us all to pray, first, for our preservation from vices which destroy the soul ; and secondly, for heavenly gifts in their stead, of all virtues well-pleasing unto God : taking for granted, that neither can vices be kept at a distance from us, nor yet virtues dwell in our heart, without the special co-operation of God's power in us.

Such a feeling of our own utter and hopeless inability to work out our salvation in our own strength, and our trusting in the help of God's grace for that work, is a distinguishing feature of Christian morality.

The proud heathen says, trusting in himself, Let only the gods grant me honour and riches, health and virtue, and I shall suffice to myself. Whence, then, comes to him this dangerous self-conceit? Hence, that the heathen never understood accurately the sinful corruption of our human nature, and its spiritual weakness; neither did he understand the essence of virtue itself; for he limited it entirely to a kind of outward respectability. But the Christian who is enlightened by the Gospel, clearly sees, on the contrary, how unable fallen man is of himself even to imagine, much less, therefore, to fulfil anything really good; so far have sin and evil reached into our soul as to defile the very spring of our innermost thoughts and feelings. But the Christian sees also clearly, on the other hand, what virtue itself requires; for that virtue, properly so called, is perfectly pure and acceptable, not only in the eyes of men, but also in the eyes of God; and that its appearance must not

therefore be a mere outward display too often hiding within itself its own secret pride and selfishness ; but that it must be a sincere love of what is good ; a complete obedience to the will of God and to the rule of conscience ; to the utter abnegation of all artifices of self-love.

The Christian, I say, sees all that; and confessing to himself his impossibility to free himself in his own strength from the venom of sin, and to acquire by his own means a virtue so pure and so perfect, he falls in lowliness of heart before the throne of God's grace and exclaims: LORD and Master of my life, keep from me a spirit of idleness, of listlessness, of ambition, and of idle talking. But grant me, Thy servant, a spirit of temperance, of humility, of patience and of love! O, All-good and Almighty God, if Thou dost not Thyself shut up the unfathomable depths of evil that slumbers within me, then, considering all my manifold weaknesses, those depths will for ever send forth rivers of

evil thoughts and deeds, and drown in filth my heart and my soul. If Thou, O most holy and righteous God, dost not Thyself put me on the way of righteousness and of truth, and establish on the rock of Thy Commandments my faltering steps, then I shall ever stumble and fall; then I shall ever purpose to come to Thee yet without moving a step on my way: and thus I shall never reach that desirable end, which was prepared for me by Thy wisdom and Thy love.

It is impossible, brethren, not to dwell attentively on the very words used by S. Ephraem in this prayer. He prays to the LORD not merely that He would fence him round from all vice and all evil, and that He would endow him with virtues, but he prays that he may be delivered from the very spirit of each of those vices, and that he may receive from heaven the very spirit of each of those virtues. So entirely do spiritual men see all things in a spiritual point of view; while carnal men only see

carnal objects even in things spiritual ! What, then, is it that we find mentioned here, as the spirit of vice and the spirit of virtue ? Is it what we, in general, call such a vice or such a virtue, or something else, greater than that ?

We shall not be far wrong if we say that when S. Ephraem prayed to be delivered from the spirit of idleness, of listlessness, and of ambition, and to receive a spirit of temperance and of humility, he had in view actual spirits,—in the first place, evil spirits of darkness ; and in the second place, good spirits of light. We are taught by Holy Scripture that man walks as it were always between two worlds ; the one on high, of light ; the other of below, dark and of the devil. Those two worlds influence him continually, and contend with each other for the mastery over him ;¹ the angelic world so acts on that man, that it protects,

¹ S. Ephraem is represented holding a scroll with this motto, "Charity and self-restraint keep the soul pure." See also Vol. I. Greek and Latin, p. 15, on self-restraint.

supports, strengthens him in the path of repentance and of virtue, inspiring him with good thoughts and feelings, and imparting to him spiritual strength and power. The wicked world, on the other hand, acts on a man in this way, that it strives to waylay him from the path of righteousness, and to hold him captive by passions and vice ; breathing for that purpose, into his heart every thing that is impure and opposed to God.

After that, is it to be wondered at, if every virtue has a pure spirit of its own which, owing to the superabundant strength of that virtue in the man himself, becomes a general guide for good to him who is under its influence ? Is it to be wondered at, if every vice has its own spirit of darkness, which also, perhaps, owing to the exceeding power of that one vice in itself, becomes as it were a purveyor of sin for sinful men ? The godly man sees with eyes enlightened from above, those two kinds of spirits, as first guides or beginnings of good

and evil ; and he prays the LORD for the heavenly gift of the bright spirit of virtue, and for his preservation from the dark spirit of sin.

Besides that, every virtue, as soon as it takes possession of a man, and every vice as soon as it taints and injures him, produces from itself its own spirit, according to its nature. The spirit of virtue is more powerful and of purer light than the virtue itself : and the spirit of vice is darker and more wicked, than the vice itself. How, then, is that spirit produced in the soul ? In the same way as in things that affect the senses. Fill a room, for instance, with any substance you please, and leave it there a long time, and the spirit of that substance is produced in the room ; so that if you remove that substance from thence, the exhalation from it will continue there a length of time. If you fill that apartment with fragrant things, a sweet smell will remain behind ; but if you fill it with foul matter, then a foul exhalation will continue

in it. So also with the soul; when it becomes occupied with certain virtues or vices of whatever sort; there is produced in it at once a spirit either of a ruling virtue, or of some favourite and besetting sin. In the man, for instance, who during the present holy season of Lent, continues to fast without weariness, there abides, while he is fasting, and after the days of abstinence, the spirit of fasting, which enables him to be sober and consistent unto the end. On the contrary, however, the man who on the preceding day, had indulged in luxury or in sensuality, will not be able to drive away from himself at once the spirit of sensuality and of ease; so that, while surrounded by spiritual objects, at the very time even of Divine Service, he will be troubled by carnal thoughts and recollections. In general, the conflict with the spirit of one given vice is far more difficult than with that vice itself. A certain vice may possibly be stopped at once, but the spirit of that vice will not soon cease in

thee, O man : thou must strive hard and a long time ; thou must wrestle with it and endure, ere thou canst be freed from it.

The holy champion for CHRIST, had doubtless all that in view ; and for that reason he prays the LORD to deliver him wholly from evil, to purify entirely, his spirit and his body, and to destroy whatever leaven of sin may lurk within him.

With such an example before us, brethren, we cannot rest satisfied with a mere outward cleansing of our soul, through the confession of only a few of our actions which are openly wicked and opposed to God's will. What does it profit to lop off the branches, when an evil root remains in the ground ? Is it wise or well-judged, to kill one large snake only, and to let live ten small ones by the side of it ? Armed, therefore, with zeal for good and for our own salvation, let us search into our own soul even unto the very inlet of evil, and expel it entirely. This, indeed, would be impossible to us alone : but we have the

mighty grace of God, before which all things are naked and bare, possible and easy. When we receive into our soul this all-powerful grace of God, through heart-felt prayer ; when we make over our heart to it, and let it work in us unhindered, and heal our infirmities, then the depths of darkness and of evil which overwhelm us, vanish ; and the dry land appears, whereon we may walk firmly in the commandments of God. His presence shines forth upon us ; it creates in us a new heart ; it renews within us a right spirit ; and we find ourselves clad in the original goodness of our first innocence and righteousness. God grant every one of us may receive it through the grace of CHRIST. Amen.

MEDITATION II.

FOR

Friday of the First Week in Lent.

MEDITATION II.

FOR

Friday of the First Week in Lent.

“O LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, KEEP FROM ME
A SPIRIT OF IDLENESS !”



NE might have expected that the great champion for CHRIST, would begin his prayer with a request for the deliverance from some other vice than merely doing nothing : for, that doing nothing, as it is commonly understood, does not appear either hurtful or dangerous. On the contrary, there are some men who reckon it an enviable state of existence. But, the godly man, looks

at things in another light ; he sees in the mere fact of his doing nothing the first enemy of his salvation ; and for that reason, he prays first of all to be delivered from such a state.

What harm, then, does a man do who does nothing ? In this very thing he sins, namely, that he does nothing.

“The man who spends his days in carelessness and unprofitableness, deceives himself and he forgets both the blessings the LORD has laid up in store for the righteous and the curses He has prepared for the wicked ; and as that man does what he likes so also he prepares for himself his own reward.”¹

For it is appointed to every man to work and to be doing. In fact, if the SON of GOD says of Himself and of His FATHER, “My FATHER worketh hitherto, and I work,”² shall it be given to man to be idle and to do nothing ? Work and activity are our lot ; for that very thing we

¹ Ἄνθρωπος ἐν ἀμελείᾳ διδύ. S. Ephr. Vol. II. Gr. Lat. p. 123.

² S. John v. 17.

have received existence and life ; for that too, are we endued with individual powers and faculties. And since our life on earth is in general of short duration, and is, nevertheless, the only time given us to win eternity, either for weal or for woe, idleness, when viewed in this light, appears already as a great crime against our own selves. For every hour spent in idleness and to no purpose, draws after itself a loss, not for this life only, but for that which is to come. The man who makes no use of the powers given him of God to work good, is like the servant, who hid his talent in the earth ; he gathers unto himself for the time to come, the sorrowful portion of that servant, from whom "is to be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have."¹

"O LORD, may I never act dishonestly by the talent Thou hast intrusted to me, so that the interest of it come to nothing in my hands, and I be punished by Thy Justice, like an idle servant ! May Thy Judg-

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 29.

ment find no fault in me at That Day with regard to Thy money and to the interest of it ; nor condemn me for having dealt rashly with the capital and the interest I owe Thee. But grant that from henceforth I may be ready both with the sum Thou hast given me in charge, and with the interest Thou expectest from me ; so that at the last I may rejoice in finding correct my account with Thee, my creditor. Let me therefore cast up my accounts at once, and make right my defaults. Let me close my wounds, and root out my sins, while the Physician is at hand who is ready to cure ; and who never delays to afford me His help.”¹

Yea, verily, it will be taken away from him : and by whom ?—by God, Who is the Just Judge ; and not only at That Day, but even at present, through his idleness. For it is in the very nature of that sin to weaken, to impair, and at last to wear away in us our powers and faculties. In fact, it is as if you were to discontinue to walk and to use your feet : if you did it too long, you would at last lose the power of walking, and hardly be able to rise and to stand upright. As with the body, then,

¹ Lo mori ephuq, &c. S. Ephraem, Exh. ii. p. 373.

fo also with the foul. Every faculty of the foul—when brought into activity is improved and strengthened ; but when left inactive, grows weaker, and wastes away. What, for instance, is there by nature more lively and more ready to make itself heard than our conscience ? Yet, if we neither exercise nor guard it, its workings within us are hindered ; its voice gradually ceases to be heard inwardly ; at last it slumbers and sleeps, and man is left without a conscience. But there are other spiritual faculties in man that wither and wear away even sooner than conscience. A man who, for instance, does not pray for a long time, brings himself with difficulty to a prayerful attitude and frame of mind, and then only for a few minutes : and the man, too, who is not exercised in abstinence, cannot endure one single day without his usual allowance of food.

“ Beware lest thou ever cease to pray, whether in the field, or at home, or wherever thou mayest hap-

pen to be. For prayer is the safeguard of temperance; the curb of anger and a check on a haughty spirit. Prayer drives away rancour and envy from the heart; it corrects impiety; it is the strength of individuals and the wealth of the family; it is the good government of the state; the strength of the kingdom; success in war; and safety in peace. Prayer is the seal of chastity; the faith of married life; the escort of wayfaring men; the guard of those that sleep; the confidence of those that are awake; a blessing on husbandmen, and a refuge for seafaring men. Prayer is the advocate of the accused; the freedom of the captive; the comfort of the afflicted; the delight of them that rejoice; the consolation of those that mourn; it is the feast at one's birth; the wreath of marriage; and the burial of the dead. Prayer is intercourse with God; it is an honour in common with Angels; it is the promotion of the good, denied to the wicked; and it brings sinners back to God. You see, brethren, what prayer can do! It is the most precious treasure of your life. Neither forget nor cease to pray; but continue therein with all perseverance."¹

But idleness is dangerous not only in that it deprives us of many blessings, but

¹ Τῆς προσευχῆς μὴ ἀποστῆς. S. Ephr. Vol. III. Gr. Lat. p. 19.

in that it brings about with it woeful results. What are these results? Vice and corruption.

If our soul were like instruments of music, that are themselves without feeling, and which when no longer played upon, continue silent and at rest; then it might possibly remain inactive without injury. But with our soul it is otherwise: owing to its spiritual nature, it cannot remain idle. If so, there happens to it the same as to a field left untilled: the ground gets covered with weeds, and the soul is filled with evil thoughts and feelings. Thus idleness may justly be said to be the soil from which sprout and grow naturally all manner of wickedness and of sin. No one is so beset with impure thoughts and sinful desires, as the idle man. His thoughts not being steadied by the pursuit of any object, are carried hither and thither; and like the raven let out of the ark by Noah, they are drawn to whatever object of sense entices them for the time. Then the imagination

taking advantage of that opportunity, paints to itself seductive images of objects once before seen or thought of: memory then refers to some occasions when the passions were indulged unlawfully; the mind in turn suggests—either a variety of worldly considerations, or doubts respecting spiritual and holy subjects; and the heart of that man finds itself disposed to every kind of lustful and wicked impulses.

Besides all this, idleness has the fatal property to produce in a man listlessness and ill-humour; leading him to seek distractions and amusements which, if they be to the taste of an idle man, are in general such as to hurt his soul: because they turn upon objects that are either of sense or downright opposed to the will of God. And here we may look for the root and spring of a certain passion for amusements, to which an idle man is subject, and which too often destroys both his health and his reputation; ruins both his fortune and his position in society; and in a word makes of him

everything but what he might and ought to be.

Further, we must not forget that for the greater part of men, the vice of idleness brings with it poverty and want. But poverty leads men to turn to unlawful means to obtain subsistence. And as the idle man, from his habits of self-indulgence, becomes in general, more inclined than other men towards sensuality and pleasure, so also the temptation of availing himself unlawfully of the labours of others for that purpose, is still greater for the idle man than for any one else. Look at men shut up in dungeons, and inquire into the causes of their crimes, and you will find that the greater part of their guilt arose from nothing but idleness.

Holy and godly men did know all that; and for that reason they strove to drive from them nothing so much as idleness. One would have thought that their life spent in solitude and in contemplation released them from much labour, especially

of the body : for they had little of their time left apart from prayer both public and private. But, knowing the danger of idleness, they carried on works of labour even in the wilderness ; and did not cease to toil even during the discharge of their most solemn duties. Who is, I pray you, that man sitting on the brow of one of the hills of the Thebaid, who sings psalms while he is plaiting rush-baskets ? It is the light of Egypt ; the great Anthony. Those baskets find their way to Alexandria ; there they are exchanged for some bread, wherewith the old man of a hundred years supports at times the failing strength of his feeble body. Who is that man who, in the dead of night, by lamp or moonlight, works as a tentmaker ? It is S. Paul. By day he expounds the Gospel to clever Greeks, and he spends the night in working at his trade, that he may not be chargeable to any one of his indigent hosts. Who is that other man who, in a mean dwelling of Nazareth works hard from morning till

night with hammer and saw in hand, as a carpenter? It is S. Joseph, the bringer up of the LORD JESUS, and the protector of His Mother. The labour of his hands supports that holy family; for, in general, among holy men, their time was divided between the service of GOD and labour. One of their first rules of conduct was, to support themselves, not with the hands of others, but with their own. And their labour not only sufficed to the few wants of their humble estate; but it enabled them also to help others around them; by feeding the hungry, by clothing the naked and by redeeming captives out of prison.

But, it will be asked, what are those to do, who, owing to their social position are exempt from all toil or labour, especially of the body? What can they do? They can make for themselves a work suited to their strength and to their circumstances. We make pleasure for ourselves, do we not? Why then not work also? And will it be said that pure and useful objects

to occupy the soul and to captivate the heart, are not equal in importance to manual labour? A career of benevolence will alone supply a man with every object he may wish to do good. And as such a work grows less irksome, so also it becomes more free from sin, and a more natural exercise of our powers; and then our aim is attained. But idleness destroys both bodily and mental exertion.

“The idle man giving way thus reasons with himself: To-day I feel listless and out of sorts. What then? and what must I do that I can't leave undone? I will do nothing to-day; but take my rest a little, and to-morrow I will spur myself on and do double work. Thus that brother idles away one day and draws on the work of another. But on the morrow the evil dæmon of idleness breathes into him greater listlessness than the day before; for he has to think of the day that is lost, and of the present one that is not spent as it ought to be.”¹

In thus reasoning on labour and idleness, brethren, we have had in view man's estate

¹ Χανώσας τὸν λογισμὸν. S. Ephr. Vol. II. Gr. and Lat. p. 100.

in general, or rather the state of a man not yet regenerated by the grace of GOD ; who has not yet begun to live in CHRIST. For the man who has already received the grace of GOD, finds it indispensable to holiness to be always active in spiritual things, since he has to go on from strength to strength. But idleness, in this case, would hinder his progress in good : and what is not to advance towards perfection, but to go back ? With godly men, however, even sleep is not inactive ; since during the silence of slumber, they are enlightened by visions of GOD's judgments.

Having then, brethren, so exalted an end of our existence (and we are all destined to some work or other,) let every one of us for himself and all of us together, exclaim with S. Ephraem : LORD and Master of my life, keep from me a spirit of inactivity and idleness ! Grant that my days which are so short, may not be spent in worldly vanity and idleness ; grant that the talents intrusted to me may not be buried in the earth of for-

getfulness and of sloth ; grant that through dislike of labour or trouble, I may not reckon a burden what Thou givest me to do, and thus deface Thine own image in me ! But give me to be bold in every good and blessed work ; give me to labour without weariness in the cultivation of my nature for eternity ; and grant that whatever I do, be done to Thy glory, O LORD, and not for my own pleasure. Amen.

MEDITATION III.

FOR

Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent.



MEDITATION III.

FOR

Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, KEEP FROM ME
A SPIRIT OF DISCOURAGEMENT.”



A SPIRIT of discouragement seems to be contrary, not only to worldly pursuits, but also to the Christian life. How so? Because the Christian life requires constant spiritual activity, vigilance, manly courage, and strength; but what activity, what vigilance, what strength is there in him who is without energy? Therefore the kingdom of God, in which the true Christian is to be found, is, according to the holy Apostle, “righteousness, and

peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST ;"¹ but what peace, what joy, has ever the man who is wanting in energy? Therefore those who think that the life of a Christian is inseparable from inactivity or want of energy make proof, that they do not know for themselves what is the real spirit of Christian life. No; that spirit is a spirit of light, of vigour, and of strength; a spirit of continual peace, and joy unfeigned. True, the Christian does not attain at once to that blessed state, just as a man who is dangerously ill does not recover his health in a day. But for a Christian, the very consciousness that he begins to recover from spiritual sickness, already gives him both comfort and consolation, which, increasing from day to day, fill his soul with peace and joy.

True, also, that the earnest Christian, who, while engaged in working out his own salvation, has already a foretaste, though

¹ Rom. xiv. 7.

perhaps only at times, of higher and more spiritual pleasures, and who therefore avoids the noisy joy of the world, is often thought pensive, or even melancholy by those who know not the nature and depth of his feelings. But he reckons no more the loss of his share in worldly joys, than a man in his manhood regrets the interest he no longer takes in the games and pursuits of his childhood. His thoughtfulness, or as some people call it, his melancholy, does not proceed from a spirit of discouragement, but from other causes; and frequently from the thought that so many can find pleasure and rejoice in those very things over which he can only weep and lament. And lastly, it is also true, that the Christian, seeing the constant warfare that must be carried on to the end of his life, against his sin and his passions, is exposed from that very cause to trials and temptations, of which lovers of the world have no idea whatever. But this spiritual conflict does not produce in him a feel-

ing of discouragement ; for the soldier of CHRIST goes forth to encounter his spiritual enemies with even more courage and valour, than the soldier who fights for a prince of this world.

For that reason, brethren, when you see a true Christian suffering from a feeling of discouragement, beware lest you should draw from that any conclusion to his disparagement as Christian. No, the state of that man simply tells you that he, a member of the Body of CHRIST, is not yet perfected in faith and in devotedness ; that he, owing to the weakness of his human nature, is still sick at heart. And it may be that this spiritual infirmity expressly requires the heavenly Physician for the complete recovery of health.

“What Physician is there like unto Thee, who is never weary to bind our wounds ? who, when he has closed one and a fresh one opens, is ever ready to bind and to heal that too, and at all times !

“Thy love is full of care for the sick ; and Thou art never tired to come to his side. Thy grace cries *to the sinner : man, thou shalt be forgiven !*

"If thou sinnest seventy times seven, I will forgive thee at once. If thy account is of five hundred talents, I will remit it to thee, as I did to the woman who was a sinner.

"If thy sins reach ten thousand pounds in weight, I will remit them to thee, if thou only ask it of Me. If thou labourest but one hour in the evening, I will yet give thee one penny :

"And if thou comest among the last, I will receive thee as one of the first. I will heal every one of the wounds inflicted on thee by the devil.

"I will bind all the bruises made on thee by the robbers ; yea, if thy whole body is dead, I will give it life ; and if all thy soul is afflicted, I will make it whole."¹

However that may be, discouragement is always a state of the soul which is not natural to it ; it is a sickness, which, if it increase and continue long, may become extremely dangerous, and cause the death, not only of the spirit, in despair, but even the death of the body—by destroying it. "The sorrow of this world," says the holy

¹ Man 'otfuvo acwutok, &c. Exh. ii., S. Ephr., Syr. and Lat., Vol. III. p. 373.

Apostle, "worketh death."¹ For this very reason, holy men have never dreaded anything so much as a feeling of discouragement; and have lost no time in availing themselves of every means in their power to ward off that foe, when it first showed itself. A depressed spirit, assuredly, would have been more dangerous for them in their solitary and militant existence, than for men living in the world: but even those who move in the world cannot give way to that feeling without danger to their soul and to their body. And the more this danger increases, the longer this unnatural state of the soul continues. It behoves us all, therefore, to search into the causes of a depressed spirit; and to try and find out the best means of counteracting it.

The sources whence a spirit of discouragement usually flows, are many: they are from without and from within: they come from the spirit and from the senses.

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

As regards the first of those causes of sadness, it may arise in souls that are pure and near to perfection, from their being at times left without the grace of GOD. A state of grace with GOD, is in itself a blessed state. But inasmuch as a man who finds himself in that state, may not always remember that this unbroken state of grace with GOD depends on his own good works done in accordance with it: the grace of GOD at times departs and hides itself completely; and it leaves for a while to himself the man in whom it loved to dwell. Then the same thing takes place in that sanctified soul, as if midnight happened at midday, or a midwinter frost on the most beautiful day of a luxuriant spring. There appears in that soul darkness, cold, and death; and with all these, sadness of spirit.

As to the second cause of this spiritual depression it proceeds from the effects of the spirit of darkness; as persons experienced in spiritual life do witness. Unable to make that soul stumble and fall

through sensuality in her way to heaven, that spirit of darkness and enemy of her salvation, that fails to seduce her through the goods and the pleasures of the world, then turns to other means and fills her with deep anguish and want of courage. In such circumstances the soul is like a traveller, suddenly overtaken by a thick mist and fog: he sees neither what lies before, nor what is behind, him ; he does not know what to do : he loses all energy and spirit, and falls a prey to indecision and to a certain absence of all strength to proceed. Persons the most subject to this kind of discouragement, are those who have already made no small progress in their struggle in the path of virtue, after having overcome temptations from the lusts of the flesh.

The third source of discouragement is, our own fallen, impure, weakened nature, which is deadened by sin. As long as we act from motives of self-love, full of the spirit of this world, and enveloped in the vapours of our own passions, so long is

that sinful nature in us alive and flourishing: keeping up its strength and spirit, its boldness and perseverance. But only change the ruling motives of that life; leave the broad road of the world for the narrow way of Christian self-denial; take to repentance and to self-correction; and then your own inward emptiness appears at once, your spiritual weakness is seen, and the deadened state of your heart is felt. As long as the soul does not continue to be filled with an ever fresh spirit of love for GOD and man; feeding by faith on the strength of CHRIST'S Cross, and abiding like a branch, with every thought and feeling, in the Tree of Life, which is our LORD JESUS; so long also the spirit of discouragement must inevitably be felt, in a greater or less degree. Happy the soul, that does not remain long in such a state, which is not far from the pit of spiritual despair. The persons that are most liable to this kind of discouragement, are sinners who give themselves over to sin.

The fourth and common source of spiritual discouragement is the want, but especially the loss of, active habits of work. If the soul ceases to make use of her powers and faculties, she loses both life and vigour ; she becomes hindered by sloth and inactive habits ; her former occupations become actually repulsive to her ; she begins to feel a deep emptiness within her ; and then follow disappointment and weariness, and a spirit utterly cast down.

This state may also proceed from various painful circumstances in life, as the death of near relations and of friends, the loss of favour and of income, and other unhappy events. All this, according to the laws of our nature, is intimately connected with pain and sorrow to ourselves ; but according to the laws of its own nature, sorrow must grow less in time, and disappear altogether when a man adopts proper means of stirring himself up, and does not give way to his grief. If he does not adopt those means, then a spirit of sadness inevitably takes hold of him.

This sadness, again, may proceed from certain considerations, in general gloomy and heavy for the heart, when the soul hardly gives herself to thoughts that become her, and she looks at things in another light than that of faith and of the Gospel. Thus, for instance, a man may easily fall into discouragement from thinking often of all the wickedness that rules in the world ; so that, here on earth the righteous sorrow and suffer ; and the ungodly raise their head and have the upper hand ; as if to all appearances, everything were given up to the fitful lusts and passions of men.

Lastly, the source of much spiritual sadness and discouragement may be found in certain weak affections of the body ; especially of some particular members thereof.

From whencesoever this want of moral courage may come—prayer is ever the first and the last remedy for it.

“ By Prayer the righteous overcome ; and by prayer sinners are saved.”¹

¹ S. Ephraem, Exh. iii. p. 385.

In prayer, man places himself face to face with GOD. But if, when standing before the sun, he must needs enjoy his light and feel his warmth, how much more does spiritual light, life, and warmth follow necessarily and immediately from prayer! Besides that, both grace and help from above are brought down upon us by prayer, through the HOLY GHOST: and where the Comforter is, there is no room for sadness or discouragement; even bitter sorrow itself is turned into sweetness and joy.

“Prayer is indeed a strong armour; an inexhaustible treasure; riches that never fail; a safe and smooth harbour; and that which makes the sea calm. Prayer is the root, the source, and the mother of a thousand blessings, and even more powerful than a kingdom. For a king, though he reign, is subject to the same ills and sorrows as other men. But if a man draw nigh unto GOD with boldness, by offering to Him a single-hearted and earnest prayer, and only touch the king, every infirmity will flee from him, and the prayer of a poor humble man will thus work alone what neither wealth could do, nor attendants procure, nor skill achieve, nor all the pomp of royalty avail. But I do not mean a

cold indifferent prayer, but a prayer instant and continued, from a soul that suffers, and from a mind intent upon it. That is the prayer that rises to heaven ; and that returns from thence in showers of blessings from God.”¹

The reading and the hearing of the Word of God, especially of the New Testament, is also a powerful means to prevent this feeling of discouragement in us. It was not in vain that our SAVIOUR called unto Him all those that travailed and were heavy laden ; promising them rest and joy. He did not take away with Him that joy back to Heaven ; but He has left it whole in the Gospel for all them that sorrow and that are sad and heavy laden. And when we allow the spirit of the Gospel to reign within us, then indeed we cease to sorrow without hope ; for the spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of peace, of quiet, and of consolation.

¹ Μέγα γὰρ ὄπλον εὐχή. S. Ephraem, Vol. III. Gr. and Lat. P. 455.

The services of the Church, but especially the Holy Mysteries (sacraments) are also a powerful remedy for a want of courage in our spiritual warfare. For, in the Church which is the House of GOD, there is no room for such a spirit; and the sacraments are directed against the spirit of darkness and of weakness of our nature; especially the sacrament of penitence¹ and of the Holy Communion. After having relieved itself from the burden of sins by confession, the soul feels relieved and takes fresh vigour; and by partaking in the Eucharist of the nourishment of the Body and Blood of the LORD, the soul is quickened into newness of life and joy.

Intercourse with men rich in Christian spirit, is also another means of preventing our spirit from being cast down in our daily conflict. By mutual intercourse we generally get more or less out of the deep and

¹ I translate the original: but I myself, only believe in "two sacraments, as generally necessary to salvation: that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the LORD."

is not penitence? generally necessary to salvation?

hidden gloom by which the soul is overwhelmed, when sad and discouraged. Together with the opening of the lips of a man who is sad and dejected, one may say, that the recesses of his spirit are also laid bare, and open to the light and warmth of spiritual intercourse. Moreover, through the interchange of thought and feeling in conversation, we borrow from those with whom we converse a certain degree of strength and of vitality, which are so necessary to a man whose spirit is sad and cast down.

Another powerful help against this depression of spirit is, to meditate on comforting subjects, to fix one's mind upon one of them in particular, and to dwell on that. Since, when we are in a depressed state, either our mind remains altogether inactive, or it revolves around sorrowful objects. In order to come out of that state then, we must constrain ourselves to dwell on opposite subjects. For instance, if our sadness proceeds from the loss of some beloved friend,

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have acted foolishly and sinned, I have
faith.

the maid of the LORD, who hast worked
thyself will come and meet thee with
thyself will welcome thy soul which is pure,
into the Paradise of GOD ; where it will
be more among the saints and righteous in
of light.”¹

Exercise and occupation also drives
the man of spirit. The man who is in
this moral inactivity, is not natu-
rally given to take trouble of any kind :
why should he ? Let him only begin
to exert himself, though against his incli-
nation : then let him continue his exertion,
even if he make no progress in it ; this
effort or exertion first quickens the body
and then the spirit, and the man begins to
take courage : and through this exertion
the mind turns imperceptibly from painful
subjects. This is already no small gain as
regards depression of spirits.

Lastly, if the source of this depressed
state lies in bodily infirmities, the Chris-

¹ Ho far'hay li dovuro, etc. S. Ephraem. Funer. S. xxxiii.

tian will not despise any help that he may derive from medical skill : for that skill is a gift of God. " The LORD hath made the physician for the use of man,"¹ says Scripture : so that a physician is the servant of God for our good.

All that we have said about this spirit of discouragement, relates to moral discouragement, in a Christian. But do worldlings and sinners suffer from such a state of mind, they who never trouble themselves about the salvation of their souls ?

Oftener, and a great deal more than others, although, as far as appearance goes, it would seem as if their life consisted for the main part of business and pleasures of various sorts. And yet it must be said in all truth, that inward dissatisfaction and a secret weariness are the never-failing portion of men living in sin. For conscience, if it be not smothered in them, eats up their heart like a worm. But their inward man,

¹ Eccclus. xxxviii. 1.

nevertheless, even if it be crushed down, raises sometimes his head, and groans. An involuntary deep and secret forewarning of the coming Day of Judgment and of retribution, alarms the soul that lives in sin ; it exasperates, and disturbs the foolish amusements and pleasures of sin and sensuality. The most hardened sinner feels at times, that he is like a branch without a root, like a building without foundation, that within him reign desolation and gloom ; and that he is all wounds and death. Whence then comes that irresistible running after constant dissipation, which we find in those who love the world ? Hence, that through that pre-occupation they may be for a while taken out of themselves.

What shall we say, then, to worldly minded men about their sadness of spirit ? It is a happy thing for them ; for it helps to call and to lead them to repentance. Therefore, very far from driving away like a sickness this sadness of spirit from them, they ought on the contrary to use it like a

remedy, to restore them from the unfruitful sorrow of this world unto a godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation. And let them not think that any sort of means to deliver them from their spirit of sadness can be found, as long as they do not return to the path of righteousness, and do not correct themselves and amend their life. The vain and frivolous pleasures and joys of this earth, never will fill the vacant space within: for our soul is wider than the whole world. On the contrary, in the course of time, those earthly joys of the flesh wear out the strength, distract and bewitch the soul, and become at last the source of heaviness of spirit and of ill-humour. Meanwhile, godly sorrow, that heartfelt contrition for a past life spent in forgetfulness of God's laws, though at first it may apparently increase the soul's uneasiness—in the course of time it ministers to the complete cure of all spiritual diseases; for it brings with it "righteousness, peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST." Amen.

MEDITATION IV.

FOR THE

Friday of the Second Week in Lent.

MEDITATION IV.

FOR THE

Friday of the Second Week in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, KEEP FROM ME
AN AMBITIOUS SPIRIT !”



MAY we be kept indeed from the spirit which, when once aroused in an angel of light, doomed him to darkness eternal, and hurled him down from heaven ; from the spirit which, having possessed our first parents, caused them to be driven from Paradise, without hope of return ! May we be kept from the spirit, which blinded Pharaoh, and made him ask : “ Who is the LORD that I

should obey His voice?"¹ from that spirit which seduced Dathan and Abiram, and thrust them alive into hell beneath, because of their rebellion against Moses;—yea, brethren, may we be kept from that spirit which led heretics to act against the voice of the Church; which drove factious and seditious men to rend the bosom of their native land; which incited turbulent writers to sow tares of corrupt morals and manners through whole generations;—may we be kept, I say, from that same spirit which, notwithstanding its haughtiness, can develope itself in the smallest man; and when once in him, makes him satisfied with nothing so little as with his own state and circumstances.

In point of fact, brethren, no one is safe from a spirit of ambition and of exaltation. That spirit creeps even into the very wilderness; and often sets men, who have renounced everything, to take precedence

¹ Exod. v. 2.

of others ; if not of some individual, yet in their very separation from all pomp and power. It shows itself in the youngest children ; and makes even a boy set himself up as leader of his fellows, and give them his orders with arrogance ; it makes him look with envy on a rival, and brook angrily to be deprived of his assumed authority. And what shall we say of the world and of society in general ? There it is already received as a rule, that he is a bad soldier, who will not struggle to become general. For when men look at the race of life, few of them do it without ambitious views of their own, and without extravagant desires. But how is it possible that ambition should not be common among men, when parents and tutors make it a duty to instil that spirit into children, and look upon it in them as a pledge of their future success in life ?

And in fact, it becomes a pledge ; but of what ? Not of their success, but of their failure in after life ; when, instead of rising

as they devoutly wished to do, they fall into the very dangers they hoped to avoid. But, to begin with, is it possible for all to reach an elevated position of brilliant and distinguished honours? That goal is, unavoidably, to be attained by few only. For the rest, therefore, to strive after distinction, is to strive after a thing altogether impossible, and therefore it is hurtful to them to do so. And secondly, an ambitious spirit is in general the very worst help possible in our efforts to obtain honour and merit. For a man who is in prey to an ambitious spirit, hardly ever has patience and discretion; both of them virtues indispensable to success in the affairs of life. But the man who is filled with a spirit of ambition is, on the contrary, ready to adopt every means in his power, the sooner to reach his object; and using these means without judgment or caution, he subjects himself to frequent falls and disappointments. In the event of his failing and being thwarted in his plans, he grows worse; he allows him-

self to act with such arrogance and folly, as of themselves will deprive him of what he already possessed. In general, men of that sort, that are dazzled by ambition, miss the way to public services and honours : and they shut themselves up too soon within the circle of domestic life. The peaceful and happy routine of that life may possibly make up to them for the loss of greater and more brilliant distinction ; but, unfortunately, an ambitious man seldom finds in it rest for himself ; because he brings home with him a spirit of dissatisfaction at his want of success ; a spirit of murmur and of hardness of heart. Besides, the passion for appearing above others, looks even at home for an object in everything ; but owing to the nature of things it often meets with opposition ; and then it loses all control, and torments both itself and others.

A proud man is unbearable and disagreeable to everybody ; but mostly so, when he is endowed with peculiar abilities :

for then everything, by which his nature is distinguished and adorned, only serves to make him lower others; and who likes being thus lowered? Therefore do people in general endeavour to avoid men of that sort. But, an ambitious spirit displays itself also even in persons of moderate ability. These, however, are not so much avoided as despised. And what cause is there for pride in one that is despised?

What then, some one will say, is a Christian never allowed to desire a prominent position in society?

The Christian is not forbidden to wish for anything that is good. He may desire to occupy even a high and distinguished office, if he feels himself capable of taking it: but how is he to desire it? As if he thought himself especially destined to the functions of such or such a high calling? That would be a degree of self-esteem and of pride quite unpardonable. Or as if he thought the aim of his existence utterly missed, in the event of his wishes not being

realised ; and so fret and worry himself ? No : that would be indeed, not to understand the bearing and the end of his life. Or is the Christian to wish for merit or distinction among men, as if all means to obtain it were lawful or allowable ? But, the world itself would not bear such ambition and arrogance. What then is allowed to the Christian as regards honours and marks of merit ? He is allowed to prepare and fit himself for the event of his being found worthy of a post of honour ; when he would bring out and perfect every kind of ability given him of God ; bring it to bear on rightful objects for the public good ; and make proof of activity, of honesty, and of love, for the weal of others. He may labour at all that, as much as he likes : all that is praiseworthy and acceptable not only to men but also to God. But to seek ardently and at all costs a high position or office, especially through artifice, double dealing, treachery or deceit, and then to murmur when that object

is not gained, is nought but meanness of heart and recklessness; and all that is a work that has nothing Christian in it.

The Christian awaits quietly his call from above; he receives it as it comes and enters in peace the road that opens before him; and yet he does not himself come to it, but he makes use of his abilities and of his acquirements in that sphere, in which he finds himself placed; without objection to a high appointment, and without reproaching others for his being overlooked. For you may be sure, that God's Providence, after having endowed a man with special gifts, always takes care that they shall not remain idle, and opens before him some sphere of usefulness, by which those gifts shall be turned to account. It may, indeed, appear to us, that this sphere is narrow, according to our own ideas. But if we, looking at it attentively, do well all that it requires of us, we shall find that all the good that is in us, will of itself be brought into full play, succeed and bring

forth fruit. But, on the other hand, it often happens that this round of duties becomes heavy ; yet only at first, and only to try our patience and humility ; but afterwards, it is widened by a hand unseen, according to our faithfulness, in the discharge of the duties allotted to us ; and then, he who thought himself doomed for ever to a lowly place, finds himself raised to the high position, which was at first denied him.

But even without this high position in society, it is always possible for a man to do much that is really useful, so as to be first and foremost in it for the good of others, if that please him. How much good there may be found around many a path not yet made ; and how many blessed deeds to be done, that are not yet begun ! Let us only consider, without losing courage because of our not being raised on high to be seen of men ; let us begin to act and to do, though it be little and seen of God only, that which no one has ever yet done ;—thus we shall

really be first to frame for ourselves a new sphere of usefulness and of distinction : and we shall set the example not only to mere beginners, but to the whole of society. And is not that the very way in which began the useful life of many friends of humanity, whose names would have continued lost among a host of other names, if they had walked in the paths of honour and of distinction that are common to all ; and who now shine in the roll of history, for the very reason, perhaps, that they were not allowed to tread those public paths, but were left to discover for themselves some new career for the good of mankind.

But, reasoning in this way, we may possibly rouse a spirit of ambition in some one who is disposed to it, instead of driving it away from him. Left this should be the case we will proceed at once to show, what is required of a Christian in order that he may attain to a high position in the eyes of others. “ Whosoever will be chief among

you, let him be your servant.”¹ Here is a law, given by Him Who is in all respects, “the first and the last.”² Thus, then, the higher a Christian stands, the more it behoves him to be humble, hard-working, and self-denying. The beginning brings with it, of course, trouble and care, labour and sorrow for that which is under his hand. Now he sees at once that which is difficult for him, and his ambitious spirit falls foul of it: but does that spirit incite those who love it to aim at a high position for the sake of labour and of public good? No; it makes them see in that high position only self-indulgence and gratification; only rank and praise of men. Do away with all those considerations from a man’s mind: and the bait is gone. Yet look at the heavy responsibility which is inseparable from a high position, whether in the eyes of God or in the opinion of men; and then instead of longing for distinction among men, you

¹ S. Matt. xx. 27.

² Rev. i. 17.

will rather feel a dread of a high station and you will look at it, as you would at a high building the very thought of which alone, makes you feel afraid and giddy.

But, some one will say, there is implanted in man's nature a desire after excellence and greatness; ought we not to cherish and to encourage such a feeling? Doubtless; it is our duty. And if we fostered and cherished it with objects that concern our soul, then we should never be seduced by human greatness, nor ever look upon it as the highest aim of all our earnest wishes. For the desire after greatness and distinction which is innate in us, is not only wider than the whole earth, but also wider than the whole world. This desire, fostered in us in its pure energy, would save us from the mean considerations of earthly ambition.

But inasmuch as it is in the very nature of this natural desire not to remain inactive, the Creator has set before all men without exception a high standard of excellence.

And what is it? It is the aim to which the Gospel points, and which it invites us all to reach. What can be higher than the promises which are contained in it? According to its teaching, we are all appointed to reign with CHRIST; to have dominion over the whole world; and to rank among angels on high. Such is the distinction that awaits us all and every one of us! Let every one, then, strive for it. Not only is no one withheld from it; but, on the contrary, every thing urges us onward to it. Meanwhile, who are those that make for these high honours and who take them upon themselves? The mean men of this age, and therefore of the world, as the Apostle says; that is, people who keep themselves aloof from worldly honours and dignities.

“Consider this world with all its changes, its joys and its sorrows, as the crowd looking on the runners in the race and on the wrestlers in the games.

“See how he that runs strives for a crown that withers in one day; how much more oughtest thou, to

strive like a true Christian, for a crown that fadeth not !

“ ‘ He that strives for the mastery,’ writes S. Paul, ‘ restrains his thoughts and cares, until he comes to the crown.’ ”

“ In our wrestling match with the wicked, it behoves us then to be single-minded and in earnest, until we gain the victory over him ; and escape clean out of his wiles, and out of the snares he sets for our ruin.”¹

But what of those who find themselves on the height of earthly greatness ? Alas for them ! deceived as they are by their own exalted position, they seldom look at it in earnest. With them, unfortunately, it happens, as on the summit of high mountains which, being covered with snows and frosts, glitter in every sunrise and every sunset with all the colours of the rainbow, and delight the eyes ; but, for all that, they continue for ever bare and barren, and without one single sign of life.

Considering all those dangers, if the hand of Providence places us on the high pe-

¹ *Beftadiun*, etc. S. Ephr. Exh. ii. p. 376.

defal of human honours and dignity, we shall stand on it in the fear of GOD ; not forgetting our own unworthiness and the great obligation laid upon us : not intoxicated by our own elevation ; but fixing the eyes of our mind and of our heart on the glory of our most high calling ; on its thrones and crowns, which are awarded to them that are worthy, not by the whim of man, but by the most holy and righteous will of the LORD of all. But if Providence has determined that we should walk on earth in a deep valley, we shall continue in it with courage and devotion ; remembering, that our LORD is LORD of the hills and of the valleys ; that a lowly station, is only for a time ; and that we are all appointed to such an exalted state, that all honours and dignities of this earth are but a vision or a dream when compared with it. Amen.

MEDITATION V.

FOR

Wednesday of the Third Week in Lent.

MEDITATION V.

FOR

Wednesday of the Third Week in Lent.

**“ O LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, KEEP FROM ME
A SPIRIT OF IDLE AND FRIVOLOUS TALK !”**



VIDENTLY idle talk is a very dangerous vice, against which we cannot pray too earnestly. For the holy man David, as you, brethren, have often heard, ceases not to pray to the LORD, saying : “ Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth ; and keep the door of my lips.”¹ And the wise son of Sirach exclaims in

¹ Psalm cxli. 3.

prayer: "Who shall set a watch before my mouth, and a seal of wisdom upon my lips?"¹

But with us, brethren, on the contrary, words are too small and insignificant to be cared for, and too worthless not to be squandered about! And so it is, that the very men who might set an example of the wisest and best use of their words, that is, men endowed with remarkable mind and acquirements, are often the first to neglect this gift of speech that is in them, and to set an example of thoughtlessness in the use of it.

And is that as it should be? No, indeed; evil, most evil it is, for, our LORD Himself says that we shall have to give account of every idle word;² how much more then, of every evil word, we have spoken! It seems to us, that our words vanish into the air: but on the contrary, they remain whole, and they are gathered and sealed

¹ Eccclus. xxii. 27.

² S. Matt. xii. 36.

unto the day of judgment and of reward. For that reason, the man given to idle talk, gives out of his own lips the judgment that is one day to fall upon his head. And is that little?

“Let us then, brethren, keep aloof from evil works, and also be afraid of sinful words: for words are part of our works.

“Evil speaking will fill a place with murder; and the tongue will fill it with the sword.

“Impure thoughts will fill a place with adultery; and deceitful words will fill it with snares:

“And evil counsel is to those who hear it, as a deadly poison.”¹

And we might perhaps think within ourselves, that if we are judged by our words, that would be a rather severe judgment. But no. That judgment is just and inevitable. For we alone fancy that our words mean nothing and that we may scatter them about thoughtlessly without any evil result to ourselves; whereas, in fact, the words of a man are so little to be trifled with and of

¹ Narheq hokil. S. Ephr. Serm. on Reproof, Vol. III. p. 685.

such value, that he will have to give an account of every one of them.

Why, then, are our words so great a thing? because they are evidently, an expression of the Word of our Creator. GOD has a Word, and man has a word. True, that the word in GOD, is not what the word is in man. In GOD, the Word is the expressed image of His person, the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD; yet in ourselves, a word is not a vain sound, it is the expressed image of our spirit; so that if we were to gather together all the words of one man, we should see in them the exact image of himself. Is it then wise and prudent to undervalue this our own expressed image, and to deface it recklessly with blots and scratches, and, to spoil it, without pity for ourselves?

Further, it is by speech that man is both in appearance and in reality distinguished from other creatures, around him. It is the chief token and the principal means of our sovereignty over the world; as shown,

indeed, in the very beginning by the fact of all living things being brought to Adam to receive their name from his mouth. What is there that the word of man has not wrought when used in its pure and legitimate form, as it was used by holy men of God? It stopped the sun in his course; it shut up and reopened heaven, and raised the dead to life. After that, who is there that will not see in man's word, the sceptre of his ruling power over the world? If we are not yet in a fit state to wield that sceptre as it ought to be: at all events, let us not throw it in the mud or break it in pieces foolishly. The voice of animals is but a weak and imperfect imitation of man's speech; and yet see how carefully they use it! and only when pressed to do so, and to the purpose; spring returns—and they are ready to sing with all their strength a song of praise to the glory of their Creator; but at other seasons of the year, they remain silent.

Further, the whole race of mankind is

held together by speech. It conveys from one of us to another our thoughts, our feelings, our wants, our joys, and our sorrows, our undertakings and our failures in them. By words the past is mysteriously bound with the present, the present with the future : and these periods of time which never have seen each other, continue in strait fellowship through words only. Take away speech from men ; and every thing will be at a standstill in their world. How then shall we cover with the rust of sin, or rub with poison the golden chain that binds the whole of mankind ?

But draw your attention further still to what results from the words of man. Every word that proceeds out of your mouth, shall never again return to you ; but it goes, from mouth to mouth and from lip to lip for years and centuries after, causing numberless thoughts and feelings to arise in others ; and creating new motives of conduct and of action. Until having grown into an enormous tree, laden with every

kind of fruit according to its nature and form, that word meets you the author of it, at the day of judgment and of retribution. How, then, can a man feel no concern in so fruitful a source of evil or of good, and multiply it himself by thousands, without a thought on his part?

But even at the very time a man utters a word, that word does not remain idle. In the first place, others form their judgment of us, from our words; for our lips either procure for us respect, or they bring upon us discredit and contempt. "The prudent man," observes a wise man of old, "gets favour for himself through his words: but he who multiplies his words, shall be held in abomination."¹ Idle talk is sometimes tolerated for the sake of amusement; as one keeps certain birds for that same purpose; but it never gains respect. If when you talk idly others form their judgment of you, and yet do not show disgust,

¹ Eccclus. xx. 8—13.

be sure that it is only in appearance ; and that most of those who hear you, condemn you in their heart. Is it wise, then, not to value highly that from which depend either our honour or our dishonour ; the love or the hatred of all who hear us ?

If we pretend not to care for the opinion others form of the right or wrong use we make of our tongue, then we shall never escape chastisement at their hands ; for idle talk brings with it its own punishment. A man of idle words is empty within ; his mind continues small ; his judgment incoherent ; his views mean ; and his opinions either futile or prejudiced. In the eyes of an observing man, the idle talker is no better than a silly child, who knows not when to hold his tongue. Such a man is unfit for any great or useful work ; and so it was thought in olden time, when philosophers did not receive as disciples men who did not make proof of their fitness for action by keeping a long silence at various times.

Lastly, we must not pass over without special notice, the fact that the emptiness of soul and the unsteadiness of mind which result from idle talk, do not stop on our lips and in our words; but according to the laws of our nature, they pervade our actions and our whole life. S. James¹ observes most wisely, that "if a man offend not in word he is able also to govern his whole body," which is the reward naturally given for restraining one's tongue. He, on the contrary, who is given to sin with the tongue, soon begins to sin also in his conduct. In fact, who makes the worst Governor and Judge? The man who talks idly. Who executes badly the orders of his superiors? A man who talks idly. Who makes a bad father, son, and friend? Again, a man given to idle talk. Who makes a bad mother for her family? A woman who talks idly. Where is the source of tittle-tattle, of quarrels, and of disputes?

¹ S. James iii. 2.

On the lips of a woman who opens her mouth at random for the sake of talk only.

For all this, therefore, brethren, do not wonder if the word of GOD condemns so sternly all idle talk ; and if it threatens with judgment all words that are not only evil, but even idle and vain. And it is for our real good : since our words are our ruin.

How, then do you ask, are we to make use of our words, so that they may never turn to our own condemnation ?

We ought to use our speech, in the first place, with the utmost caution, for this is required by the high origin of speech, given of GOD ; by its solemn beginning in the world ; and by its dangerous effects on others and on ourselves.

In the second place, we ought to make use of our tongue for objects worthy of it, to the glory of GOD ; for the benefit of others, and for the amendment of our own imperfections ; and never for anything that

causes shame, for impure thoughts or dangerous feelings : never for lying and deceit, for slander or calumny, or to raise quarrels and disputes.

In the third place, we ought to watch the use we make of our tongue and render ourselves a regular account of it—at the fittest time, which is every day, before going to bed.

In the fourth place, let us use our tongue in prayer to the LORD, that He will Himself set a watch on our lips ; that He will Himself preserve us with His grace from the spirit of idle talk, which at present distracts with such violence the whole world. For if holy men of God, like David, Sirach, and Ephraem, did not find in themselves sufficient strength to contend with those seducing and dangerous spirits, can we hope for victory over them, without help from above ?

In the fifth place, it behoves us to feel penitent for evil and vain words, and labour to make up for them, without delay,

by a fit and proper use of our tongue, and confessing when we can, the improper use we made of it in aforetime.

“Gracious LORD, put Thy holy fear as a guard before my eyes, that they may not look on vanity ; put it upon my ears, that they may not listen to wicked words ; put it upon my mouth, that it may never speak aught but truth ; put it in my heart, that it may never think evil ; put it into my hands, that they may not work iniquity ; and put it at my feet, that they may never walk in paths of wickedness ; but so direct my whole being that it may act and live always according to Thy commands. And have mercy on me, a great, great sinner !”¹

When we begin to act in this manner, then our conversation is gradually set free from everything in it which is unworthy of a Christian, and it comes at last to be what it is intended for ; that is, a living echo in us, of the Word of our Creator ; a bright expression of our purified nature ; a powerful organ of our empire over other creatures ; a strait bond of union between

¹ From the Armenian of S. Nierfes. Amenakhsam Der, etc. Pr. 9.

ourselves and other men ; a faithful means of imparting to others that which is good in our own selves, and of receiving from them in return the good of which we are in want ; and an ever ready instrument as well as token of our progress in the way to perfection. Amen.

“Moses who had wrought so many signs and wonders, fell short of the Land of Promise because he had let his tongue slip. Even the wide and dreadful sea could not bar his way across ; but one short word became to him like a wall which he could not pass. If, then, one single word could deprive of the Promised Land, Moses, who was like a god to the children of Israel, how much more shall our tongue which we sharpen and draw out at pleasure, deprive us of the Kingdom of God ! The fire from heaven devoured the priests who were held righteous, because they were within the precincts of the sanctuary ; yet they who were set apart from other men by their office defiled themselves by their words. If such individuals, and men so highly honoured were thus dealt with, how can our tongue speak as if it despised the warning they give ?

“Therefore let us give up speaking evil of our brethren ; for the earth that spared the profane and the impure, nevertheless devoured those who sinned with their tongue. The sea swallowed up the Egyptians,

and the earth the rebellious ; and the captain who during the famine in Samaria, spake unadvisedly with his lips, received a just reward ; for the people trampled him under foot at the gate. Learn then from so awful and summary a judgment what that sentence will be which is to come ; and hearken to what thy SAVIOUR says : ‘ that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.’ ”¹

¹ Ποιήσας ὁ Μωϋσῆς. S. Ephr. Vol. II. Gr. and Lat. p. 282.

MEDITATION VI.

FOR

Friday of the Third Week in Lent.

MEDITATION VI.

FOR

Friday of the Third Week in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, GRANT ME, THY
SERVANT, A SPIRIT OF CHASTITY!”¹



Any spirit is to be obtained from above by prayer, it is assuredly that of chastity: for in order to cherish this virtue we have to fight with our own individual nature; and, in the words of a great and good man, “where our nature is overcome, there must be pre-

¹ I rendered above, page 5, the Slavonic term for chastity in this prayer by ‘temperance,’ which is the meaning of the Greek original. But here I have kept the word ‘chastity,’ as the whole of this meditation refers chiefly to it.

sent the virtue which has overcome it. In vain you will strive to drive from your own heart the spirit of carnal lust by the arguments and the contradictions of philosophers : because that spirit can present itself with equal reason on its side, and will contend with us with arguments *ad hominem*. The man, therefore, who wishes to overcome his flesh in his own strength, exerts himself in vain. But rather, let him lay before the LORD the inability of his human nature ; and let him acknowledge before Him his utter weakness, and then that man will insensibly receive from the LORD the gift of chastity."

He who wishes to be chaste, must, after the advice of holy men, not only attend as often as he can public prayer, but also have always ready at hand a short prayer for purity, against every temptation to sin. But namely, when, say they, thou feelest in thy heart the rising of some carnal desire, through either thine eyes, thine ears, or even thine own nature, then turn at once

thy thoughts towards CHRIST in prayer for help, and continue therein, until thou hast received support from Him. Having thus withdrawn thine attention from that spark of sin, which had fallen into thy heart, thou wilt thyself take from it the breath that would have fanned it into a flame ; and it will go out. And then a dew of blessing will fall on thee, for the temptation that is overcome.

Next to prayer, nothing tends to preserve chastity so much as fasting and labour. In fact, take away the fuel from under the pot, and the fire will go out of itself : take away from a body given to luxury, food, and satiety, and the love of sensuality will go. The body when wearied with labour and not with the working of passions, seeks quiet and repose. On the contrary, however, idleness and self-indulgence are the never-failing source of sensuality. The man, therefore, who imagines that he can preserve his chastity in the midst of the indulgence and the luxury to which he is

disposed, might as well lie down in the mire, and expect to rise from it without a spot. He may, it is true, succeed in daily life in preserving the purity of his body ; but, as to that of his soul, he loses it without a doubt.

For the same reason, he who wishes to preserve the cleanliness of his body and he who strives to keep his soul pure, both embrace the same opportunities to flee from whatever would evidently foil either: therefore, after the example of the holy man Job, we must make a covenant with our eyes, our ears and all our senses. For, it is not in vain that the Prophet calls our senses inlets, through which sorrow enters into our soul. All sins love to enter in at those inlets ; but no sin does it so readily as the lust of the flesh : therefore ought those openings to be well guarded ; and not opened at random. And since it cannot be, but that we must both see and hear what offends us, it behoves us to have ready by us a spiritual antidote, to be used

on such occasions. By these means at the time when anything happens that is an offence to us, let us at once, not only pray from the heart, but also think devotedly of the cross of CHRIST and of His wounds made on Him there for the cleansing of our souls from sin ; or else let us think of His actual death and burial. Thus the presence of that scandal is left surely and quickly without power in us.

A humble disposition of heart and spirit, the holy Fathers teach us, is also a high fence put around our chastity ; because, perhaps, the LORD always favours most those that are of a humble spirit ; and where His presence is, there is His grace and His blessing, and from thence flee at once every cause of offence and every sin. Or it may be, because the very nature of humility is to pull down and to crush altogether whatever in man transgresses its proper limits ; consequently, the rejoicing of flesh and blood in him. On the contrary, however, persons tried by spiritual

conflict, have remarked that pride and haughtiness, which generally unite in us to condemn our neighbour, subject the man apparently perfect sooner than any other, to temptations from the lusts and filthiness of the flesh ; until he no longer can think highly of his virtue, when he sees such a fearful wound inflicted upon him.

Dwelling on spiritual subjects, and the love for those subjects which flows from them, especially love for our LORD and SAVIOUR, for His sufferings and His cross, are also powerful means of guarding the purity of our soul and body. "The man who is chaste," says a holy man, "repels love by love ; and puts out the fire of the body with that of his soul."

On the other hand, the man of a chaste spirit, wards off from himself troubles in this life and the fire of hell. Hereafter that fire will burn of itself, but at present it may be cooled and saved from the fire of the passions, when we think of it in earnest. One champion for the faith, not satisfied with

the picture of that fire in his mind, determined to make his body feel beforehand all its intensity, "Thou incitest me to sin," said he, "let me see if thou art able to bear the torments that are threatened against sin." So saying, he placed one of his fingers over a burning candle. The pain from that fire extinguished the flame of the flesh.

The very thing which kindles the lust of the flesh, may be used with advantage, like a remedy against the passions. "Does the flesh allure thee in the grave," asks S. Demetrius Rostovski, "by wounding thee with the beauty of the bodily form? No. Then, when that beautiful living form begins to smite thy heart, think of it lying in the grave, hideous, a prey to worms and corruption, and it loses all attraction for thee."

"Vain and empty is the world that seduced me, when as yet I was not aware of its snares!" says a woman on her death-bed;

"It appeared to me desirable and lovely; like a flower in early spring, and I did not think the time

was coming when that flower would wither and die in the summer heat.

“ I was enticed and drawn into the net by the flower of youth, like a dove that is caught with grain set in the snare.

“ But now my youth, lovely as it was, and my childhood that knew no sorrow, are both laid low by death, and both together go down into the grave.

“ O thou who delightest in apparel, look at me, and blush ! Thou who art vain of thy jewels of gold and silver, look at me, and put on mourning !

“ Thou who hast a lovely countenance, and an elegant figure, look at thy beauty in my corruption.

“ O thou who art seduced by beauty, and whose heart is given to adorning thyself, come and behold me on the day of my death, and then despise the beauty of thy vain attire.”¹

It behoves us, brethren, to guard ourselves by such and like measures, from all attacks of carnal lusts and appetites. We ought, if it be necessary, to strive against them, even unto blood, so that we may come forth victorious from the conflict. And, in very deed, it behoves us to conquer ; “ for God hath called us,” as the

¹ *Hziteh dargig, &c.* S. Ephraem, *Funer. H.* xxxi. p. 287.

holy Apostle says, "not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."¹ "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, shall inherit the kingdom of God."² And forasmuch as such persons like in general to deceive themselves in thinking that their sin is not great; that they only obey the calls of their human nature; that if they hurt in any way, it is themselves alone, and not others; and that with all that they often have a tender heart, full of sympathy for others, and other good qualities, whereby they try to quiet themselves as well as by the thought of God's clemency: the holy Apostle having all that in view, says to them, "do not flatter yourselves!" You hope, he says, without considering the filthiness of your flesh, that by the aid of some of your virtues, ye will escape the wrath of God, and that you will be received into His pure and holy kingdom; but no; it is a lamentable mistake and self-

¹ 1 Theff. iv. 7.² 1 Cor. vi. 9.

deception; do not flatter yourselves, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Why not? Because nothing filthy or impure can enter into it. And do you observe where the Apostle places fornicators and adulterers in particular? Side by side with idolaters; as if all those vices were of one and the same nature; and verily they are of the same nature; for the idolater is an adulterer, since his heart which ought to be given to the only true God, by Whom he was created, is made over to an idol; whereby he violates his bond of love and of faithfulness. Thus also is the adulterer an idolater, in that instead of giving his heart to God his Creator, he gives it to the creature, and makes of it for himself an idol of shame.

We will then, beloved brethren, before all things, keep our mind pure; so that our heart being kept from lust, it may keep our flesh from all uncleanness. We will not rely upon any firmness or purity

of our own. "Do not trust to the frailty of thy flesh throughout thy whole life," says S. Leftvitchnik, "and hope not in its endurance until thou appearest before CHRIST." There only—where we shall have no more enemy of any kind—in heaven, with our LORD CHRIST, shall we rest in perfect peace ; but here, as long as we are in life, we walk among snares ; and therefore we must ever be on the watch.

"My flesh is weak," says S. Ephraem, "may it be strengthened with Thy power. Break in pieces the shafts of the deceiver, and reckon me among Thine elect, O most Mighty !

"Grant me, O LORD, that I may be Thine at all times, and that I may do what is well-pleasing unto Thee without grudging.

"And grant that, when I have once begun to strive after excellency, I may receive strength from Thee, and endure unto the end.

"For Thine is the power, and in Thee they overcome who fight manfully ; by Thee they are exalted to the highest things, and it is Thy love that supports the weak and fainthearted. And grant that no part of my life, O LORD, may be spent without fruit."¹

¹ Wamhil pagrodili, S. Ephr. Exh. xxii. Vol. III. Syr. Lat. p. 455.

“O GOD, Who hast called us in Thy grace that we may draw nigh to Thee and not perish ; O Thou that art good, Who hast promised saying : Call upon Me and I will answer thee : I knock at the door of Thy grace ; O save me ; answer me, Thou good God in Thy great mercy, and look not on all my trespasses against Thee. Spare me, O LORD, O spare me of Thy gracious pity.

“Thy hands, O GOD, created me and formed me after Thine own image and similitude, by Thy great grace towards me. They taught me the way of life, and showed me also the path that leads to hell. The wicked in his envy laid snares for me, he led me astray from Thy paths, and he has plunged me into the sins by which he shows his hatred for me. Woe is me, O LORD, for I have offended against Thee ! O spare me, and I shall live through Thy grace in me.

“The wily Robber of souls who takes them captive has robbed me of my liberty ; he has caused me to go astray and has laughed me to scorn. He caught and bound me with the sight of mine eyes ; he seduced me, and breathed into my heart wicked thoughts of sin. I then thought within myself, and conceived lust. I looked and then offended. My hand worked iniquity, and I fell and perished in all that is within me. Woe is me, for the fire already threatens me ! Spare, O spare me, O LORD, that I die not.

“O LORD, hold out to me the right hand which Thou didst extend to Thy disciples that they should not be swallowed up quick into the sea. Yea, extend

also to me Thy right hand, that I may not sink in the sea of sins which is around me. May the Baptism I received of Thee, O LORD, as a clothing to my members, be to me a plea of acceptance and a refuge, that I may live. Save me through it, O LORD, and draw me out of the deep waters that overwhelm me!"¹

What then, do you ask, is the man to do, who has the misfortune of being given to the lusts of the flesh, and is held captive by sinful habits? That, beloved brethren, which we do when fallen into some deep and rugged chasm; we look about to see where we are; then placing ourselves under the protection of the cross of CHRIST, and calling for the help of GOD and of our guardian angel, we begin to come forth from thence; we climb, as best we may, with hands and feet, it is true; but still we are coming out;—we get covered with crumbling earth and gravel; but still we are coming out: we feel sore and weary in all our members; but still we are coming out: we slip and at times

¹ Alloho daqron, &c. S. Ephr. Exh. xxiii. Vol. III. Syr. and Lat. p. 456.

we fall, but at last we are out of danger. When we act in this manner, and make use on our part of every means in our power ; then, be sure, a strength and a power against which nothing will avail, will come forth in us ; a hand we do not see upholds us, and a help which we can see often comes to our aid, sent by Him Who leaves the ninety and nine sheep and seeks in the wilderness the one—that was lost. Amen.

“ Heavenly FATHER, and God of truth, Who didst send Thy beloved SON to seek the sheep that was lost, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, receive me back like the prodigal son, and put on me the first robe of innocence which I lost by sin.

And have mercy on me a great, great sinner. Amen.”¹

¹ Hair yergnavor, &c. S. Nierfes, Pr. 3.

MEDITATION VII.

FOR

Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Lent.

MEDITATION VII.

FOR

Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, GIVE THY SERVANT
A HUMBLE SPIRIT !”



Repeat this prayer often and often, if not always with our lips, at least in thought, together with those who minister at the altar. But, nevertheless, are there many who long to earn this excellent virtue—humility? Alas! the spirit of the world, the spirit whether hidden or open of pride and arrogance and boasting, so far predominates even among Christians, that the virtue of humility is all but entirely forgotten; and if it still con-

tinues one of the band of virtues, then it is only as a rarity, once of old in use, but now found useful only by a few who, so to speak, are special admirers of this one virtue in particular.

And yet, what virtue is there more lovely in every one, than humility? I say in all and for all men; for our LORD Himself says: "to whom will I look but to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word?"¹ And we, do we not ourselves experience especial pleasure when it is our lot to have dealings, or even only intercourse, with a man who is truly humble, especially when he is adorned with other qualities?

For that reason, and that we may love humility and not fancy that it will be an obstacle in our way of advancement of life, that virtue is itself the reward promised, and serves itself to our advancement exactly as in opposite vices pride at once threatens

¹ Isa. lxvi. 2.

us with the punishment it brings, that is, abasement ; “Whoſo exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed ; and whoſo humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.” And ſince that is ſaid by God Himſelf, who has never lied in any witneſs He ever gave of Himſelf, we find that the reſult ſhows His word to be true. Yea, how many proud men have been humbled ; and how many humble men, on the other hand, have been ſet on high !

“He that goes to fight, and fights to conquer, muſt cover himſelf with the bright armour of humility.

“For as to pride, it is one of the ſhafts of the devil. With it he fought and overcame our father Adam, and his children after him.

“But the weapon of our LORD is humility. He made it to be uſed againſt the wicked, and with it He threw down Satan from his lofty throne.

“The diſciples armed themſelves with it, and with it the true ones overcame in battle : and they have made victory ſure with it for all, both firſt and laſt.

“Diſciples of CHRIST, then, lay hand on that armour : for with it you will gain the victory, and it will give you the kingdom.”¹

¹ Aino d'oyel laguno, etc. S. Ephr. Sermon on Humility, xv., Vol. III. Syr. and Lat. p. 644.

But nothing can move us, nor lead us to humility ; no, not even the word of God, nor our own experience. To be proud, to be high-minded, to think ourselves better than our neighbours ; to look down upon our equals ; and to seek pre-eminence and distinction ; is all done by us as a matter of course. Whence is that ? It comes from our little knowledge of ourselves ; from our so seldom turning our thoughts to our own defects. He who knows himself well, will always be humble, whatever be the talents he may possess. And why ? because with all and every gift or perfection we may have, we have a great many defects ; whether they be innate in us or dependent on ourselves ; and that ought to make us humble. And, in the first place notice : that our all-wise Creator, to save us from pride, after having given a man some superiority or acknowledged talent for certain things, always takes away from him aptitude for certain other things, even of the commonest ; or else He accompanies the

talents of that man, with some perceptible defect apparent to all. As, for instance, men gifted with a great mind, often have little or no gift of speech whatever : men with an astonishing memory, are often deficient in judgment : handsome men especially, are often short-sighted or dull of understanding. Even our own abilities, when they have reached the compass allowed them, and see the limit they cannot pass, ought to bring us to a humble frame of mind.

Thou man, art, perhaps, remarkable for thy great intellect, and wide sphere of knowledge. Thou then, shalt learn, sooner and probably, more intimately, than others, what all the intellect of man is worth, and how much he knows ;—how that intellect, in the words of Solomon, discovers with difficulty what belongs to the earth ; while it neither can know of itself nor yet determine what is beyond the limits of the world of senses, in Heaven above. The uncertainty and frailty of many of our accom-

plishments too, causes us not to pride ourselves in them. Thou art now endowed with health and beauty, which invite thee to glory before others : but how long will that good-looking face of thine last, those rose-coloured cheeks and ruby lips, which some call heavenly, but which, in fact, are often a look of hell ? To-morrow sickness comes, and all those charms are gone : the day after to-morrow lamentation and woe knock at thy door, and all is withered, and after some days old age arrives, and thou art then only one of many that totter in it. Is it not then better not to be singled out now from among the rest by pride, when all will count it a merit and a virtue on thy part ?

Whenever we cast a glance, however hurried, at our moral imperfections, and call to mind our manifold transgressions, done with and without our will, we have at once an ever-flowing source of humility, the same for all. For how many bounden duties for each and every one of

us, which he has either not fulfilled at all, or attended to carelessly? How many opportunities of doing good, let go without a thought; or else embraced to do some good, but either interestedly and in part only? How many evil inclinations open and avowed, and how many deeds of darkness? How many more sinful thoughts and emotions? It costs us only to look into our heart, though it be at times only, and to examine the roll of our thoughts, of our feelings, and of our actions, for us all to see how small we are in spirit, how impure in heart, and how far we are, all of us, from that which we ought to be.

“If, considering all these, and many other reasons, there come to one of us the holy desire to pray no longer with his lips for the gift of a spirit of humility, but to obtain effectually this virtue loved of God, then he will see that humility is a state of the soul, in which the soul feeling her own weakness and impurity, shuns every exalted opinion of herself; and studies continually to

discover in herself some good, and to root out all evil. But the soul never considers herself as having attained unto perfection; she looks for it from the grace of God, and not from her own frailty.

“Humility is more pleasing unto God than burnt offerings and sacrifices;

“Humility perfects the righteous; makes penitents acceptable; gets sinners forgiven, and debtors set free.”

“Humility is like a spring from which flow all kind of graces; but pride is a well that yields only evil and sorrow of all sorts.”¹

The man who is humble, always feels some holy misgivings as to himself, as to the strength of his mind and of his will; and so he is circumspect, modest and calm in all his words and deeds. He never allows himself to give a rash or an insolent judgment; much less of persons and of things which are above him, especially of the mysteries of the Faith. The man who is humble shrinks especially from praise and

¹ S. Ephr. Serm. on Humility. Vol. III., Syr. Lat. p. 644.

from a high position : for that reason he not only does not court either, but he is glad when they pass him by. He willingly yields priority in all things to others, even in good works. But when it is necessary to set the example, then he is first.

“Our LORD made charity the first of all virtues : yet how is charity got but by humility ? If thou seekest to have charity, first be of an humble spirit ; and with charity thou wilt receive also faith and hope.”¹

The man of a humble spirit meets a failure or disappointment, not only without mortification, but even with gladness ; for he knows how valuable and useful these are for the correction of his inner man. Therefore he is ever ready, without rancour to forgive him who has offended him, and to return to him good for evil. So great are the visible signs of humility ! He loves to hide his virtues, and on the contrary to lay bare his failings, if he may do it without offence to his neighbour.

¹ S. Ephr. Serm. on Humility. Vol. III. Syr. Lat., p. 645.

“Vain is every practice, every restraint, every service, every self-denial, and every kind of discipline without humility. For as humility is the beginning and the end of all good, so also is pride the beginning and the end of all evil.”¹

Where is humility to be learned? Nowhere so little as of earthly wisdom. Reason, according to its nature, says S. Paul, “puffeth up;” that is, it leads a man to pride, to self-consequence and self-exaltation; but pure love alone edifieth, by making him humble, constant and firm. But best of all is humility learnt of holy men of God, who have set us the highest examples of humility; as for instance, Abraham, who having been honoured with extraordinary revelations and with the exalted title of ‘friend of God,’ called himself earth and ashes: David, whom neither the dignity of king, nor the calling of Prophet, prevented from saying of himself, “I am a worm and no man, the very scorn of men, and the

¹ *Ματαία πάντα ἄσκησις.* S. Ephr. Vol. I. Gr. Lat. p. 23.

outcast of the people :”¹ and S. Paul, who, being the first of the Apostles in afflictions and in labour, confesses with humility that he is the first of sinners.

But in order that we might learn more willingly this virtue which is difficult for our self-love, we may take as our teacher of humility our own LORD and SAVIOUR. “Learn of Me,” says He, “for I am meek and lowly in heart.”² Of what has He not given us a lesson ? in what has He not set us an example of humility ? At His coming into our world, the Ruler and LORD of All might have surrounded His cradle if not with luxury, at least with the necessaries of life ; but where was He born ? In a stable. Wherein was He laid at His birth ? In a manger. Behold an example of lowliness and of humility for you rich ! Herod persecutes Him ruthlessly, and His life is in danger ; does He send against His persecutor only one of those twelve

¹ Pf. xxii. 6.

² S. Matt. xi. 29.

legions of angels that are always ready to fulfil His commands? Not He ; but when persecuted, He humbly saves His life by flight into Egypt. There is an example of humility for you, great of the earth ! John goes to the Jordan to preach repentance and to establish Baptism for the remission of sins ; is there room for Him there ? for Him Who did no sin, but rather Who came upon earth to destroy every sin by His own righteousness ? And what would they think if One without sin would seek that Baptism and receive it ? But the LORD asks for it, and receives it at the hands of His own forerunner. Behold an example of humility for you who set too much value on the opinion others have of you ; and who, through fear of what is thought of you, shrink even from good works ! But on Golgotha ! There, indeed, is, not an example, but we may say, a wonder of humility, by the side of which all our efforts and attempts at self-abasement are nothing.

“ True disciple of CHRIST, make humility thine own ;

for from it as from a well-spring of grace, flow all other virtues.

“It will bring thee nearer to God, and place thee in the company of Watchers and of Angels on high. It will open to thee hidden mysteries; it will fill thee with all wisdom; it will lay bare before thee depths of knowledge; and make known unto thee things hidden from others.

“For humility brings low thy pride, and keeps under the haughtiness of thy spirit.

“It says peace to all that is within thee, and clothes thee in a precious garment. It puts lowly thoughts into thy mind, and gives beauty to thy countenance.

“It subdues anger in thy heart, it roots out all passion from thy soul, and it drives away from thee all jealous and wicked feeling.

“It fills thee with love and peace, with joy and gladness; not the joy of the earthly ones, nor the gladness of the great;

“But with the joy of the SPIRIT, and with the gladness of wisdom, and it brings to thee the love of other men, and friendship with God.”¹

And if we be earnest in endeavouring to acquire a humble spirit, we need not so much reason with ourselves, as choose for

¹ S. Ephraem, Serm. on Hum. Vol. III. Syr. Lat. p. 647.

ourselves some masters and models of that virtue ; and our pattern will be our own LORD and SAVIOUR. In order to be taught of Him therefore, we must make ourselves over to Him wholly, as a little child who comes to his teacher to learn of him ; and then at His feet, we shall hear what He has to say to us. Men can at best teach and give advice ; He however not only teaches a hundredfold better, but Himself sets us the example of all He teaches, and He gives us strength to finish in ourselves the work which He teaches us to do. Amen.

MEDITATION VIII.

FOR

Friday of the Fourth Week in Lent.



MEDITATION VIII.

FOR

Friday of the Fourth Week in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, GIVE ME, THY
SERVANT, A PATIENT SPIRIT !”



MUCH encouragement is not needed by those who make this prayer ; since when and what for is patience ever out of place ? We all and every one suffer ; and the nature of each of us shrinks from affliction and pain : therefore is every one in want of a valiant and patient spirit, that he may not sink under affliction, and fall a prey to discouragement or to murmur.

But where are we to go for that patient spirit, of which we stand in need? Shall we go to our own heart for it? Alas! it is the first to give up endurance; for it flutters restlessly at the least annoyance; it murmurs and groans with pain when some great misfortune befalls it. Shall we go to our own reason for patience? It is ready, at times, to look coolly on affliction, but it is only at times; and then what comes of that look of indifference which our reason bestows on our troubles? nought but fresh anguish for the soul, and a fresh burden for the heart. Shall we look for patience in men like ourselves? but in the first place, every one has his own bitterness of heart; so that men are more disposed to share with us our joys, than our sorrows; and when they share with us our affliction, they are far more ready to weep with us, than to wipe away tears from our eyes. Shall we then look for patience in the various circumstances and vicissitudes of life? It is from them, that all our affliction, our sorrows, and our

troubles come ; so that if we look to this world, we shall find it a poor comforter. Shall we go to Nature, and to its order and harmony ? But that order and that harmony themselves reprove us for our grief. Meanwhile the sight of a man, who, while he is suffering, passes by all that which in Nature is calculated to afford him relief and consolation, only goes to show that he alone in all Nature is disordered and gloomy ; and is that little ?

Under these circumstances, the thoughts of a man given to sorrow, finding, like the dove that left the Ark, no resting-place here below, rises at last towards Heaven. An inward feeling, not easily smothered in man, tells him that there—on the everlasting hills, there is strength for the support of every weakness : there is joy to quench every individual sorrow ; there is life, that never knows of pain or of decline.

What is most unexpected, is that an impenitent sinner, when he is in prey to grief or when he meets with some calamity or

other, should sometimes raise his eyes to Heaven and expect for himself help and a patient spirit. But wherefore? Only that, having as it were gathered breath and recovered himself, he may begin afresh to follow after the same lawless and senseless purposes as before, or after others like them. Can such men expect to receive a spirit of patience? No! LORD, send them an impatient spirit; send them a craven heart and even despair in the satisfaction of their lawless desires; until they come to see that to no purpose they have gone astray from Thy Law; and that in vain they have thought to find in the world and the flesh, that which is found in Thee alone. Yea, take away from our own selves a patient spirit, if we do not use it for the exercise of charity and of devotedness to Thee; but for the service of the world and the lusts thereof!

“Happy is the man, brethren, who has acquired patience: since patience has hope: and hope makes not ashamed. Happy then, yea, thrice happy is the man

who in patience possesses his soul. For he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”¹

When a man prays for patience, it may be either for righteousness’ sake or that he may acquire that righteousness. “LORD and Master of my life, grant Thy servant a patient spirit,” may be said without shame by a man who is burdened with a large family and with poverty, who prays that he may not repine at his lot, but that he may be able to support his children by the labour of his hands ; lest if he be crushed by necessity, he should lay his hands on what does not belong to him, or use deceit and fraud. A man too, who is endowed with great power and dignity, may say without shame: “LORD and Master of my life, grant Thy servant a patient spirit,” that I may discharge as I ought my heavy responsibility, without forgetting or neglecting any part of it that may minister to the good of others ; that I may bear with Christian

¹ Μακάριος, ἀδελφοί, ὁστις, &c. S. Ephr. Vol. I. Gr. Lat. p. 6.

submission the gainfaying of men ; so that I may be all things to all men, grudging neither my strength, nor my rest ; and being put out neither by difficulties nor by failures.

So also a servant who wishes to serve his master as becomes a Christian servant, may say : " LORD and Master of my life, give Thy servant a patient spirit," that I may bear without murmur the whims and hard usage of my master ; that I may not be scandalised by the evil example of luxury and of sin, which I see around me ; that I may never lose sight of Thine eternal reward, which Thou hast promised to all Thy faithful servants in Thy kingdom. Even the worst criminal may say : " LORD and Master of my life, give Thy servant a patient spirit," when, filled with detestation for his former ungodly and lawless life, he has determined to use the heavenly gift of patience for the pious enduring of the punishment he has brought upon himself ; for the extirpation of every evil habit from

his heart, and for the amendment of his life and the cleansing of his conscience through penitence and good works.

“ Know ye not then, brethren, whereunto patience reaches, or must we tell it you for your own safety ? Patience then is not alone and single, but it lives in sundry virtues : for the patient or enduring man attains to many of them, since he rejoices in affliction, and is approved in difficulties. He triumphs over trials, and is willing to obey Him that sends them : he is distinguished by long-suffering, and accomplished in charity ; when insulted, he blesses ; in war he is at peace, and manly in rest ; in fasting ready, in prayer instant and earnest ; in his works he is blameless ; in his answers, upright ; in his errand, faithful ; in his daily conduct he is careful ; in his ministry agreeable, and in his intercourse with others he commends himself by his kind bearing. He is sweet among his brethren, and in council he is gentle and considerate ; in watchings he is cheerful, and diligent in his care of strangers. He provides for the sick ; and is first to assist those that are tempted ; he is sober in his judgment ; and in every work active and diligent. That man possesses hope who thus endures ; and he is adorned with every virtue. He may then cry boldly to the LORD, and say, “ I waited patiently for the LORD, and He answered me.”¹

¹ Ἡ ὑπομονὴ δὲ ἕως πότε. S. Ephr. Vol. I. Gr. et Lat. p. 6.

Let all such and like men pray boldly for the gift of a patient spirit ; and they may be sure that it will not be denied them. For if there be aught well pleasing unto the LORD and Master of our life, it is our readiness to endure unto the end sufferings and temptations. To such He never refuses His help.

But, how is it, says some one, that although I have long tried earnestly, and pray fervently, and cry for help, and beg above all for a patient spirit, I do not see it in me ; I do not feel the slightest relief or courage given me ? Whoever thou art, O man, who thus striveest to obtain thy request, thou wilt see that the LORD hears thy prayer, that He sees thy sorrow, that He pities thee, and that He, though not seen, guards and protects thee, to bestow on thee the crown and the reward laid up for thee in Heaven. As if it could be that He does not see thy tears, and has no compassion on them ! Thus to think would be to refuse Him the attribute of Omnipresence as part of

His nature ; which nature is love and tender mercy. Why, then, does He not give thee courage and patience ? It may be that a state of moral fear is both safer and more advantageous for thee, than assurance or fearlessness ; so that by being made to pass through this trial, thou mayest learn all the weakness of human nature, and place thy whole trust only in the LORD.

It may be, moreover, that the gift of patience for which thou hast prayed, is already granted thee, and that thou dost not see it, simply because thou hadst fancied to obtain it, but neither in the form nor in the manner in which it is given thee. In fact, if thou continuest to pray and to trust in God, thou hast already in thee at least the beginning of a patient spirit. For that spirit does not consist in not feeling one's own want of strength and one's sufferings ; in not weeping and not crying for help ; neither does it consist in not yielding under the weight of sorrows and of trials and in never failing ; but it lies in

not falling altogether, and in not giving up one's faith and strong confidence in God. To encourage thee on thy way begun at thy Baptism, we may and ought to tell thee with the Apostle one thing—that is, that the LORD never has allowed nor ever will allow any one to be tempted above that which he is able to bear; but with the temptation He will always send the issue thereof.

But as for me, says another, I have nothing left to expect or to look for but death. And what then, sufferer beloved of CHRIST, if it be death? Wouldst thou then not die, if thou wert among the first and happiest of the earth, with perhaps, every thing in thy power? Death is inevitable to thee, to me, to all and every one of us. The one thing, therefore, which every one has to see to is, that he may die in the LORD, with heartfelt repentance for his sins, and in true faith in His Redeemer. Viewed in this its true light, death is not a loss; it is only a rest from labour and for-

row. "Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours!"

As for me, says the suffering Christian, it is not the prospect of death itself that saddens me, but the thought of what is to become of my family, to which I have nothing to leave but poverty.—They will have left as their portion, Him Who calls Himself the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow; Who holds in His right hand all the affairs of men; Who delivered the three children from the fiery furnace; Who made an infant left alone on the river-flood a leader of the people Israel, and a God unto Pharaoh. What will become of thy family? That will become of them, which neither we nor thou can possibly know beforehand, but which long ago, even from all eternity was settled by the counsel of GOD; that will happen to them which at all events will minister to their real and lasting welfare. Thy family will have most assuredly to bear

suffering with patience ; but these sufferings will be sent to keep them from the offence and snares of luxury ; and they may yet be rewarded, even in this world. In fact, how many examples there are, of men of the highest order coming from poor families left fatherless ; whereas on the other hand, we see that where, apparently, everything had been done for the provision and education of the children, some of them turn out a shame and disgrace to their family.

Brethren, let us encourage and strengthen ourselves in the path of earthly sorrows and losses, by such and like thoughts ; being refreshed in our spirits by the example of our own LORD and SAVIOUR, “ Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,”¹ where He is gone to prepare a crown of life for every true follower of His, who endures unto the end for His sake. Amen.

¹ Heb. xii. 2.

MEDITATION IX.

FOR

Wednesday of the Fifth Week in Lent.

MEDITATION IX.

FOR

Wednesday of the Fifth Week in Lent.

“LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, GIVE THY SERVANT A CHARITABLE SPIRIT.”



YEA, grant it me! for “though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

Yea, grant it me! for “though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove

mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Yea, grant it me! for "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

So highly is the gift of charity prized by the holy Apostle, whose words we quote. He says of it that it is the bond, nay, the union of all virtues. He places it not only above prophecy, above the gift of tongues, and of knowledge, but even above faith and hope; for "the greatest of all is charity." And we cannot esteem this virtue otherwise; for the LORD our GOD Himself, says the holy Evangelist, "is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him."¹

But what love is it that is so highly valued? Evidently not the love of this world, though this world be full of love; but of what sort? "All that is in the

¹ 1 S. John iv. 16.

world," says the same holy Apostle, is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."¹ This impure love does not soothe or give peace; it provokes, it does not edify, but it destroys; it disturbs the peace and the happiness of families, it spreads desolation and woe through towns and villages, it often sheds rivers of human blood. That love is even worse than worldly hatred, for hatred is of itself prudent and avoids the snares of the enemy, whereas carnal love makes it a merit willingly to rush down a precipice.

Do you wish to know the nature and essence of pure Christian love? It cannot be better described than it is by the holy Apostle Paul. "Charity," he says, "suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but

¹ 1 S. John ii. 16.

rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ; charity never faileth.”¹

It is clear that such a love as that is not in the world. We were all created for that holy love, and we received it once, but we did not know how to keep it. The spirit of evil came, and troubled with his own breath of hell the spring of love in our heart. Ever since we have been at variance with the whole world and with ourselves. In fact, what is our love at present? it is for the most part covered with hatred. If we love God, it is only because He is Almighty, and we are in danger of falling into His hand to receive just judgment—and to be exposed to His wrath and to everlasting torment. Take away the flame of hell, and in many men all love even of God disappears. What love, then, is that which requires warmth from the fire of hell? If we love our neighbour, it is because he

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1—8.

ministers to our profit or pleasure, and because we find him an instrument indispensable to our self-love, our passions and our fancies. For under other circumstances we feel no eager love, but at once it is aversion and even hatred, enmity and persecution. What good, then, after all, results to ourselves from our love which, it would seem, is thus boundless and constant? That, after having been all our life the slaves of our lusts and passions, we are at last, lost in soul and body; and therefore the word of God finds no other means for our good than to enjoin to us instead of an impure love, a pure hatred against ourselves. Such is our love!

Besides this woeful alteration in us of our first love, there is in our heart another hideous evil—a spirit of hatred and spite. As we do not hide this guest which is come to us from the depths below, he shows himself in many ways, in open and secret pride, by which we neglect or despise our equals and ill brook our superiors; in a

constant envy of the least merit or quality in our neighbour, especially when that merit or quality is not found in us; in a certain secret satisfaction at the mortifications or failures, not only of strangers to us, but even of our kindred or of our friends.

“ He, indeed, is to be pitied, who suffers from envy or jealousy, for he is partner with the devil, by whom death came into the world. For he who is either envious or jealous is opposed to everybody, for he cannot bear that any one should be preferred to him. He detracts from those that are well thought of, and puts stumbling-blocks in the way of those who walk uprightly. He blames those who live correctly; and he detests those that act prudently; he says of the abstinent that he is vain-glorious; of him who sings with his heart to the LORD that he wishes to show off; of the zealous minister, that he is greedy of filthy lucre; and of him who is diligent in good works that he is seeking popularity. Alas! for him who envies his brother!”¹

The flame of innate evil, which rages in us, however it may be hidden in the depth of the heart, often bursts forth like subter-

¹ Ὁ δὲ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς. S. Ephr. Vol. I., Gr. and L., p. 13.

anean fire, in dreadful shocks and explosions which throw down houses, and lay waste villages and even whole kingdoms. Like subterranean fire also, it has an ever open crater in our lips, whence issues a thick vapour from the "bottomless pit," in the shape of abusive and infectious language. Together with that thick smoke, wars and quarrels about things of nought and vain: contentions and animosities among persons who are bound to all, by having a disposition and a friendship solid and durable. And lastly, there flows from thence, like a burning lava, shameless frauds, open plunder, violence and murder, especially in times of war and anarchy.

Looking from this point of view at the human world, buffeted all round as it is by stormy blasts of wickedness and of hatred, and feeling in its very heart a never-failing source of evil and of guile, who is there that does not feel the want of raising his eyes towards heaven, and to exclaim with S. Ephraem, LORD and Master of my life,

grant me Thy fervant a loving spirit ; grant that I may not be carried away by the universal stream of self-love and of envy ; that I may love all that Thou lovest, and love as Thou lovest ; not with the love of this world, which always seeks its own interest, but with the love of Thy beloved SON, which love is always ready to lay down its life for a brother, and knows therefore how to bear with all the failings and offences of others ; with that love, which is always ready to forgive and to love even its own enemies.

“He who has charity is not jealous, nor envious, neither does he speak evil of his neighbour. He does not rejoice at the fall of others ; he does not criminate the fallen, but he sorrows with him, and does what he can to comfort him. He does not pass by his brother in adversity ; but he aids him, and even dies with him. He who has charity, does the will of God, and learns of Him ; for our own GOOD MASTER Himself said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” He that has charity thinks no one a stranger ; but he looks upon all men as his own kindred. He that has charity endures all things, is long-suffering, and kind to all. Blessed is the

man who walks onward to God with charity within him; for then God will know him for His own, and will receive him into His bosom. That man will then live among Angels, and he will reign together with CHRIST, Who has shown His love, in that He, the Word of God, was made flesh for our sake. For by charity Paradise has been opened to us, and an entrance into heaven is offered to all, who, when enemies of God, were reconciled to Him in love. Truly may we say that 'God is love, and that he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.'"¹

But while we wait for the gift of this love which we look for from heaven, it behoves us, brethren, not to remain inactive; but on the contrary, we must prepare our souls and our hearts like lamps, that this heavenly fire may come down from the HOLY GHOST, and kindle its holy flame in them. Wherein does this preparation consist? Next to prayer, the best means to prepare ourselves for this grace of God, is to dwell on the love of God, and on that blessed bond of union, which

¹ 'Ο ἔχων ἀγάπην, &c. S. Ephr. Vol. I., Gr. Lat., p. 4.

firmly unites together in CHRIST all the children of Adam.

In fact, our heavenly FATHER embraces all men in His love : He causes His sun to rise daily on the just and on the unjust ; we are called, and we wish to be, His children ; if we are not called so in vain, if we wish to be His children not in word only, but in deed and in truth ; then how can we do otherwise than love those whom our common FATHER loves ?

The only-begotten SON of GOD, our beloved SAVIOUR came upon earth and died for the salvation of all. His love for poor sinners denies no one, neither publicans nor adulterers ; He forgave on the cross the very men who nailed Him to it, and He prayed for them. We confess ourselves sinners, we wish that our sins may be washed away in His precious blood, and that they may be covered over with His merits. But will our prayers be answered, will our sins be forgiven, if we do not imitate the greatness of soul and the love

of our Redeemer ; if we remit not our neighbour his debt, which, compared with our own debt to God, is nothing ?

The HOLY GHOST with which we were signed in the font at our Baptism and from whom we received an earnest of eternal life, has put His precious, indelible sign not on us only, and not on those others alone whom we love, but on all and every one. He is powerful to make of Saul a Paul ; of a publican, an Evangelist ; of a malefactor, hanging on the cross, a citizen of Paradise. Shall we then, after that, look on any one as an outcast ? and deny altogether our love to those to whom the HOLY GHOST has denied neither His mark nor His love ?

And whither are we ourselves going ? to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, whereinto no wickedness nor hatred can ever enter. Therefore if one of our fellow-creatures incurs our anger by his evil conduct, we are not to feed our hatred against him from a love for our own selves ;

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MEDITATION X.

FOR

Friday of the Fifth Week in Lent.

“LORD OF HOSTS, GIVE ME TO SEE MY OWN TRANSGRESSIONS, AND NOT TO JUDGE MY BROTHER : FOR THOU ART BLESSED FOR EVER AND EVER.”

WHAT could appear easier as well as more natural to man, than to consider his sins and offences? Yet it is evidently not our natural disposition ; but it is a gift, and not a small one, since so great a champion for the Faith as S. Ephraem prays for it. Truly that gift comes only from above ; and it is of the first necessity for all and every one of us.

There is in every one of us an inexplicable aversion to self-examination and to the consideration of our own short-comings. That may possibly be a sign that sin did not originally belong to our nature ; but anyhow, such reluctance on our part is fraught with great danger to ourselves ; for how shall I enter upon the amendment of my life, if I do not know, what evil there is in me, and wherein I have sinned ? And yet it is of all inquiry that about which we trouble ourselves the least, so much so, that it will never occur to a man who in other respects is of a most inquiring mind. Thus you may see a multitude of persons, who, like Solomon, have searched into everything, from the cedar to the hyssop that grows out of the wall, and who yet have not once examined themselves be it ever so little, as they would examine an insect or a blade of grass. Judging from that, one might also think that man does not hate, and therefore does not wish to know, himself. And yet, with it all, he

loves himself above every thing, and in every thing he seeks himself alone. He brings everything round to himself; ever and anon he is taken up with himself; but to inquire into one's character and conduct, to examine one's heart and conscience, is a work for which man feels no sort of inclination. In this respect, he is ever ready to busy himself with anything he likes, save himself. He willingly spends days and nights in following up investigations the most futile, provided he be not made to watch and to meditate with his own conscience.

In fact, do we spend much time in searching our conscience, and even before confession, when it becomes a duty to render account of our conduct to the ministers of the Altar, and especially to our SAVIOUR Himself, and then listen to the sentence of either our absolution or condemnation to all eternity?¹ We think it much if we spend

¹ Those are the author's words which I translate, but not mine. I do not believe that Confession is a Sacrament, neither do I think

a few hours in this work of all the most important. But how many hours in the day and the week and in the month do we spend in pursuits which are not exactly dangerous for our soul and for our conscience, in the most careful summing up of the debtor and creditor account of our traffic; in looking at our books and objects of art; in forming plans for various kinds of amusements; in the sale or purchase of a few animals?

Is it in vain that the Word of God repeats to us at every moment, that our soul is infinitely more important than our body; and that if we lose our soul it will profit us nothing to gain the whole world? Is it then to no purpose that the pastors and teachers of the Church tell us, that sinners cannot disregard the souls of their own

that any one on earth has power to enforce it upon another; that right belongs to God alone. But I think that, as the Prayer Book teaches, at certain seasons, and under certain circumstances, the confession of sins may be not only allowable, but even desirable and most beneficial to the penitent, or dying man.

hearts, without risk to themselves ; because if those sores be left without care, they become incurable and cause the death of the soul? Is it then in vain that our inner man, left without help, sometimes raises his head and by his groans reminds us, that within us are death and destruction? We are deaf and blind to all those suggestions and warnings ; we cast in running a glance at the gloomy outline of our life, and after correcting here and there one or two lines in it that were all but monstrous, we cover it again at once with a curtain of forgetfulness.

After that who can awaken us from our woful insensibility and indifference about ourselves, if the LORD Himself does not come to us and touch our heart with His Almighty Grace? But in order to obtain that grace we must ask for it in fervent prayer, without which, that grace will find in us neither entrance nor abode. For that reason a man who begins to feel a want of it from the knowledge of his impure state

and of his sins, ought to turn a prayer to the LORD as often as he can and cry from the bottom of his heart: LORD of Hosts, give me to see wherein I offend! Take away from the eyes of my understanding the film of self-love, that I may see how black are all my misdeeds; guide Thou Thyself the search of my soul into my conscience; that it may not fail in that search, and wander hither and thither after objects that are not for my good, although they ensnare and deceive me. For what will it profit me, if I know everything, and do not know my own self? What advantage will it be to me to accomplish great and profound works, at which the world will wonder, if I do not regulate my own heart; if I do not cleanse my conscience, and do not prepare myself for eternity? Far better would it be for me to remain for ever in obscurity, than to come out in the world, in which kingdoms rise and fall; so that I may not remain ignorant of what takes place in my heart and in my conscience, when I

fall, and when I must rise alone from that fall.

Along with this wretched indifference to oneself and to the state of one's soul, there is in man another evil—a miserable disposition to judge others. We do not speak of the weaker sex, in which the inclination to tittle-tattle about their neighbours, is often a ruling passion; but of men, from whom one would expect quite another example; and who, together with the weaker vessels, demean themselves by the same failing. And, in this respect, from whence is that sharpness of sight in those that are so short-sighted in mind? From whence is that sagacity and keen discernment in those who are dull in all other judgments? From whence comes that indefatigable inquiry into the actions and intentions of others, in men who are themselves inactive?

And here again it exists in those persons not without a strange contradiction. Oblige those self-constituted judges and busybodies

to judge the faults of others according to law, they soon lose all patience and get weary of their office ; they show negligence in it, although it may be with injury to the public good. But without being obliged, and when at home at leisure, those same men never grow tired of judging and criticising the whole world.

Whether a man be virtuous or vicious, the results of this natural inclination to blame others are very much the same. For instance, it is not always proper or becoming even in an earnest and devoted man, to busy himself not only with blaming but also with judging the faults and defects of others ; for if any one ought to know that "with what judgment he judges he shall be judged" himself in turn, it is assuredly the servant of the LORD. But are there many even devout persons, entirely free from this unfortunate disposition to blame others on every occasion ? With some of them on the contrary, their devotion serves instead of the right all men assume of seeing

and noticing a mote in their brother's eye. It is just the same with persons openly vicious and dishonourable. Their own sins and wickedness must always be printed on their lips, and become as it were the object they seek to find in others as well as in themselves. But they who are ready to blaze abroad in the world the faults they find in you, add from their own evil fund, that which in your own conduct does not come up to their own estimate.

After that it is not to be wondered at, if the truly good Christian finding within him among other failings that of being so ready to blame others, and seeing at the same time how impossible it is for him always to keep his tongue from evil speaking, should turn to the LORD in prayer, and beseech Him to enable him through His Grace, to see his own short-comings and not to blame his brother. Indeed, O LORD, I have enough to do with my own sins, with the sores of my heart, which being as yet neither perceived nor reckoned, re-

main without being healed, and from day to day become deeper and more incurable; and as to the sins of others, if those who commit them do not depend on me, in what do their sins concern me? They have their judge, and also the healer of their wounds, which is Thy truth and Thy love. Do they stand? To Thee, their LORD, they stand. Do they fall? To Thee, their LORD, they fall. And Thou art always strong to raise them up.

“It behoves him who finds fault with others to be, himself, above all blame. And he who judges others, must take care that his own doings do not judge him in return.

“He who fain would set right the froward, must himself see that he walks uprightly, and he who sets himself up to be a looking glass for others, must first of all look well to his own person.

“I cannot think myself pure, by excusing in me what I reprove in others; for my very members bear heavy accusation against me in presence of the Judge.”¹

Many sinners have become holy men,

¹ Aino droshe, etc. S. Ephraem. Serm. on Reproof, p. 654.

through repentance ! It might be that those I blame have already ceased from sin, that they have long since begun to repent, and that they are already made righteous by Thy grace ; should I then continue to follow them with evil words, and like the devil, slander them who have already given themselves to Thee, and are justified by Thee ? May Thy grace keep me from it, and may it grant me, instead of blaming others to see my own sins ; to look and to see them, but not with the indifferent eyes of a stranger ; and when I see my own poverty, my own sores, even the death that is in me, may Thy grace, O LORD, enable me to weep on account of what I see in me ; to heal the putrefying sores of my own soul ; yea, to see my own sinfulness, and to use every means in my power not to fall into fresh sins, and into fresh danger of eternal ruin !

If to all this some one asked, what great use apart from the grace of God, there is in our accustoming ourselves to consider

our own sins, we answer that the best means to force oneself to that self-examination, (we say deliberately, 'to force,' for without such determinate will on our part not one good work, much less this self-examination can ever be done) is, to set apart a certain time, be it ever so short, for the rehearsal to ourselves of our sinful actions or feelings: but set apart so that it may never be used for any other purpose. By this means we place ourselves under the unavoidable necessity of dwelling on ourselves. But by thus dwelling on ourselves, we learn, not at once, it is true, yet at length and continually what kind of men we are; what is our ruling passion; and what are the failings of our mind and heart.

This advice will appear impracticable to those who do not parcel out their time aright. But first, there is not a man who has no time at all to himself; he must have some, however little and scarce it be. Secondly, if he cannot dispose of his time as he wishes, then let him dispose of it in his

thoughts; that is always in his power. Art thou, for instance, a servant, who must be ready at all times to obey thy master's orders; is there not between one order and another, some little time which thou canst turn to the purpose of examining thyself, thy life and thy sins? Such holy and pious exercises will fill up many idle intervals of time, when, perhaps, thou knowest not what to do, but to grow weary, to speak evil, or to do much worse!

How can we, on the other hand, accuse ourselves not to blame our brother, that is, none of our fellow-creatures? First of all, let us look upon every one of our fellow-creatures as upon a sick man, for sin in reality is a sickness, and the worst of all. When looking at our brother in that light, our passion for finding fault with him will cool down and vanish. For do we find fault with a sick man as if he were not sick? No; we feel for him a ready sympathy. Secondly, we ought to lay down as a rule, when we have seen something

evil in any one, or have heard it of him, at once to pray for him in thought. This is always easy to do for everybody; and, besides, it is the best remedy for a spirit of finding fault with others; for this never can endure prayer, but rather flees from it.

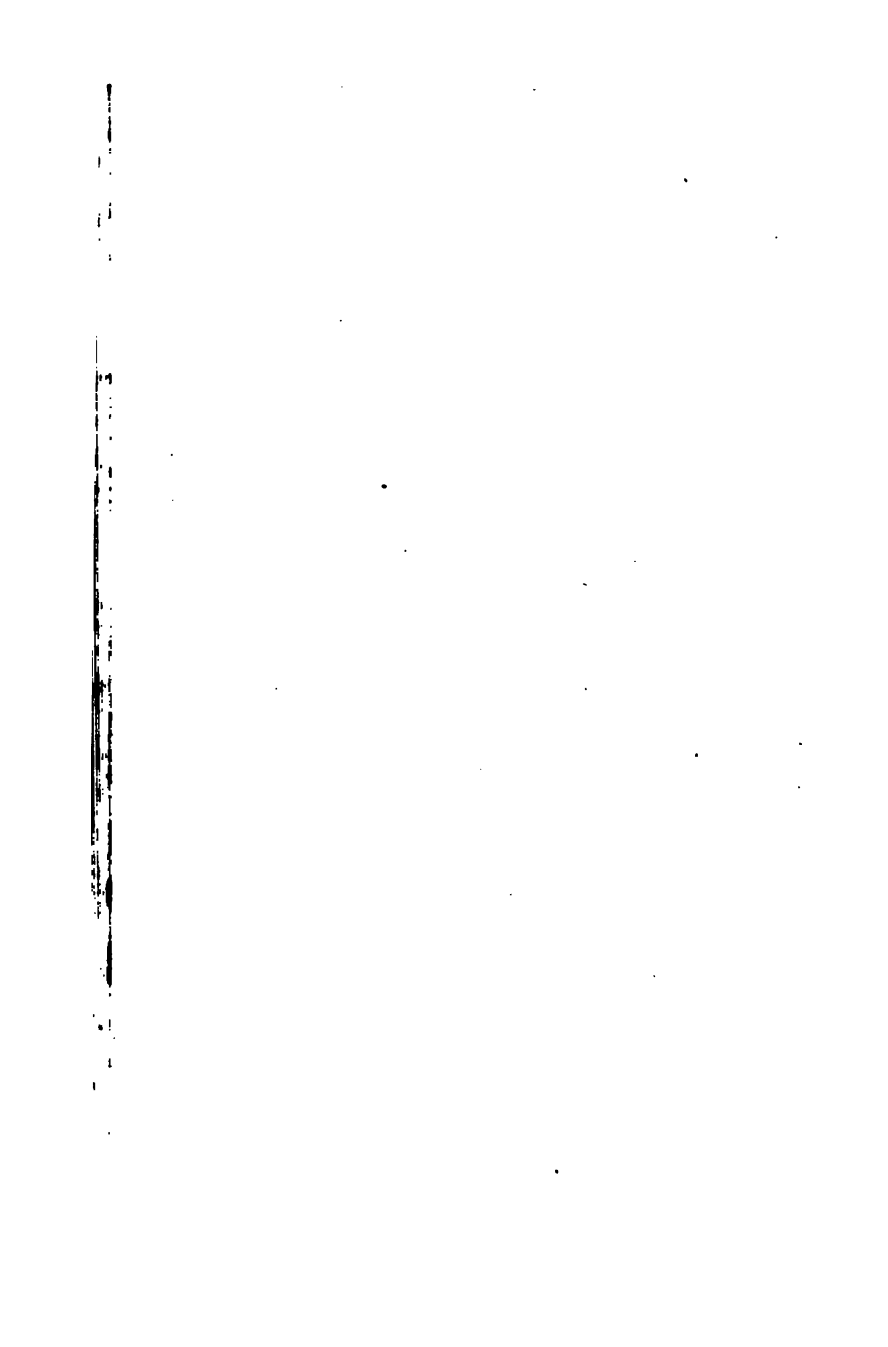
When we thus do our part according to our own ability and strength, we shall accustom ourselves to look at our own failings, and not at the sins of others: then the LORD will give us His grace, with which we shall attain to that most desirable state, in which we only know our own selves and our own sins; and do not suppose there is even one sinner so great as ourselves in the world. Amen.

MEDITATION XI.

Wednesday

FOR

Friday of the Sixth Week in Lent.



MEDITATION XI.

Wednesday FOR
Friday of the Sixth Week in Lent.

BRETHREN, this prayer of S. Ephraem is ended ; and our own Meditations on that prayer are now come to a close. Will then the spirit of prayer and of meditation also cease in us with that prayer ? GOD forbid !—for if it be so, then in vain have we spent our time here : in vain have we come forward and shared with you our thoughts and our words. To little or no purpose too, have you been gathered in such numbers, and have you

remained so long in so small a space, following our contemplations with your understanding.

But if what we have seen in you during this holy season of Lent, can serve as a pledge for the future, then indeed we have no very sorrowful hope of you. And what have we seen? a constant, hearty, and devout disposition to obey the Holy Church and to hear her admonitions; we have seen a deep piety dwelling on sacred subjects and earnestness on your part in the work of your salvation; we have heard repeated sighs expressing the remembrance of sins; we have even been witness more than once of your tears. Can it be then, that all that would cease and vanish, without leaving a trace behind? If it were so, brethren, we should regret no work of ours more than this. Do we often labour earnestly about anything without meeting with a reward adequate to our endeavours? No, in that case we should grieve for you and for your souls. For, if going to Church, and hear-

ing her teaching during so long a season, left not the slightest result in our morals and in our life ; then that would show that our hearts are like stones, on which no one expects either seed or fruit of any kind ; like stones, on which, if anything grows it withers at once because it has no depth of root, and brings forth no fruit. That would imply that we are stone blind, and deceive ourselves most miserably ; for when the season of Lent arrives, we go softly in the way of evil, we stay the pleasures of the flesh, and curb our passions, and to all appearances, we turn to God ; but when Lent is past, and the world again presents its poison to our lips, we rush headlong to meet that foe, we drink to the very dregs of the poison he holds up to us ; and we make him an offering of the little progress we had made in that which is good.

What fruit, then, do you ask, dost thou expect from us ? and what effect dost thou think thy words ought to produce in us ? Not our words, beloved. If we trusted in

our own words and in our own understanding; then we never should have ventured to open our lips before you. But we feel persuaded that He is with us, in this very place, although unseen, He Who has chosen us, unworthy as we are, for the work of the ministry, and " hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" He Who, when He pleases, gives lips and wisdom to the foolish men of this world; He Who can with His word make of stones children to Abraham; and turn the most hardened sinner into a vessel unto honour. We feel within us the certainty that when we preach the Gospel of CHRIST, and our voice sounds in your ears, at that very time your hearts are placed under the influence of the divine grace of CHRIST'S Spirit; of the Spirit of Him Who is our Chief, who by means of fishermen and of publicans has turned the whole world from darkness to light, from the kingdom of Satan unto God; Who

can not only touch the heart that is dyed in sin, but even change it into a new heart, both clean and holy.

With such superior and all-powerful means at hand, why should we not expect powerful and supernatural effects? Why then not expect the miracle of conversion? In fact, has the hand of the LORD ever been shortened? Is there then in our SAVIOUR no more of that blood which cleanseth us from all sin; and in His Spirit, no more fire to make us holy? Do not think however that you have not a solemn and important work to do; because you have heard it from a man, one of yourselves. That man himself may be far from perfection; he may even be the last of sinners; yet he has addressed you in the Name of the LORD; he has spoken to you as in presence of your SAVIOUR, while together with Him the Spirit of Truth and of Grace Himself worked in you. To despise such workings in us, is to think nothing of the salvation of our souls.

Ah! do not forget that, beloved. Be not like the man who, having looked at himself in a glass and having seen spots of dirt on his face, instead of washing his face at once, goes and forgets both what he had seen and what he ought to have done after that.

Let us explain this farther. You have had laid before you, as far as we could do it, the vices which disfigure our soul; and which, for that reason, it behoves a Christian to drive from him at all costs. You have also had a picture of the virtues which can adorn our whole nature, which for that very reason also, it is our part to obtain and to preserve at all risks to the end of our life. It cannot be that, while you heard our words, your conscience did not speak within you; for that the same vices, and the same want of virtue exist in you which are in all other men. Unless then we count as nothing both vices and virtues, ought we not, after what has been said and felt in the conscience, to adopt all possible means to era-

dicare the one and to implant and strengthen the other ?

Thus, he among you who hitherto was given to idle talk and jesting, ought from henceforth to weigh his words and to keep the door of his lips. He who was wont to lead an idle life and to waste his precious time in dissipation or amusements, let him look out for himself some occupation suited to his station and circumstances.

The man who was carried away blindly by visions of ambition ought now to study humility and to give up following after the cheating voice of the praise of men. He who was in the habit of never looking at a woman without harbouring temptations to murmur and to complain of his fate, ought from henceforth to look at her with devout submission to the will of God, which is the remedy best suited to our soul. He who in his intercourse with others was rude, hard, and unamiable, ought at once to adopt a contrary mode of conduct and of action. He who forgets his own sins, and

loved to look at the failings of others, let him cease from henceforth to see the mote that is in his brother's eye, and let him begin and learn to cast the beam out of his own eye.

When such a change takes place in you, then you may say that the present season of Lent was not spent by you to no purpose, that you have not visited God's holy temple in vain, and that you have not listened to exhortation without result. Then shall we too on our part bless the LORD, that His grace has deemed us worthy to follow up the work of your salvation. But until such a result be seen, even if our work looked as if it were done, both you and ourselves shall continue to be in a dangerous by-way between progress and failure, between loss and gain.

Without a doubt the bright spirit of virtues and the dark spirits of vices, stand around, waiting to see towards which of them we turn our eyes, and which of them we will follow. Brethren, do not leave them

long to look at us in that uncertainty. Why should we linger? Why should we halt between two opinions? Let us walk with angels of God in the way of their own angelic virtues to the kingdom of God, until, after having remained around, and accompanied us during the course of our life, they bear witness to us, and attend our departing soul to Abraham's bosom. Let us turn away now and for ever from the angels of sin and wickedness; let us cast out of our heart and soul, through repentance and confession, everything which is of them, that is against the Spirit of God and to the ruin of our soul. So that the angels of darkness may not stand by our death-bed and drag our unfortunate soul as their own into the depths of hell.

May the LORD, Who has enabled our weakness to preach unto you the way of truth and of righteousness, grant you both the will and the strength to enter that way with courage; and to walk in it with a firm step and without stumbling. For our

own part we shall not cease to pray to the LORD always, even with faltering lips, that He may shed abroad His blessing upon you all. Amen.

HOMILIES AND OTHER EXTRACTS

FROM

S. CHRYSOSTOM, S. SEVERIAN, AND S. EPHRAEM,

FOR

Passion Week.

HOMILY OF S. CHRYSOSTOM,

FOR

Palm Sunday.¹

LET us go on, brethren, from one wonder of our LORD to another, and advance, as it were from strength to strength. In like manner as in a gold chain made up of links fastened one within the other, each one hangs on its fellow, and thus every link of that chain

¹ Translated from a not very accurate Greek text with a Slavonic version, published at Vienna in 1845. As I am not aware of any available copy of S. Chrysostom's works nearer me than Oxford, I have had no opportunity of comparing this text with another.

follows in succession from the other, and, as it were, accompanies it: so also do the several remarkable facts mentioned in the Gospels, bring apace from one to the other, the Church of GOD that loves to celebrate Him in her festivals; and they cheer her up not with "meat that perisheth, but with meat that endureth unto everlasting life."

Let us then, beloved, hearken this day with ready hearts and willing ears, to what the LORD GOD will say to us in the prophets and in the Gospels about this most solemn festival. He will, by all means, speak peace unto His people and unto His faints, and unto those who turn their hearts to Him.

This day the trumpets of the prophets have aroused the whole earth, and have gladdened and hung with garlands the churches of the LORD in every place. And taking the faithful from the exercise of sacred fasts, and from their contest with their passions, they have taught them to take up the song of victory and to sing a new song of praise

in token of peace to the honour of CHRIST in Whom we conquer our foes.

Come, then, all of you, let us rejoice in the LORD ; come, all ye nations, let us clap our hands, and let us shout aloud unto GOD our SAVIOUR with a voice of rejoicing. Let no one deprive himself of his share in that joy ; let no one be wanting to the call ; for the seed of the disobedient is doomed to destruction. Let no one ignore the coming of the King, and neglect to go forth and meet Him ; lest he be shut out of the marriage feast ; let no one be found among you in a fullen mood, and slow or indifferent in welcoming him, lest he be condemned with the wicked inhabitants of the city ; I mean with those citizens who would not let the LORD reign as king over them. Let us all together run forward with gladness ; let us all receive Him eagerly ; and keep the feast in honour of Him with every token of joy. Let us spread our hearts before Him instead of our garments ; let us raise our hands and our voices unto

Him in psalms and hymns and in thanksgivings ; and let us shout with one accord and without ceasing : " Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the LORD !" For those who bless Him are blessed ; and those who curse Him, are cursed even at present.

Again, then, I call to you ; for I will not cease to feel anxious for your good. Come, beloved, let us bless Him who is blessed indeed, that we may be blessed of Him. The word that is gone forth has summoned men of all ages and of every rank to come and praise the LORD with one accord ; both kings of the earth and their people, princes and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens. For a new feature in this wonderful event is, that the privilege of taking the lead in singing this heavenly song in praise of Him : " Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the LORD !" is granted, as of old by Moses with the people coming out of Egypt, to the tender and innocent age of young children and sucklings.

To-day, David the blessed, robbed of his lyre by children whose band he joins to rejoice with them, as of old before the ark of God, sweetly sings and plays with them "Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the LORD!" To whom we say: Tell us, O prophet, who is that One coming in the name of the LORD? "It is not mine to teach it you to-day," replies David; it is solemnly given to children to "still the enemy and the avenger" by Him who "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hath ordained praise." So that at the sight of this wonderful event, "the hearts of fathers be turned to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

Say, O ye children, whence is that beautiful and charming chorus of your bands? who taught it you? who gave you to sing it so beautifully? who brought you together? where are your note-books? Show us your leaders. Come with us, you reply, sing and make melody with us, and

you will then learn what Moses and the other prophets longed to know and to find themselves.

Since we are encouraged and invited, and the children have held out to us the right hand of fellowship, come, beloved, let us vie with that godly band, and with the Apostles, let us make way for Him who in the east rose into the heaven of heavens, and whom it pleased here on earth to ride upon an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass. With the children we will break off boughs, and clap joyfully with the branches of them, till the HOLY SPIRIT himself inspires us, and we fend up on high in harmony the song taught us from above : " Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the LORD ; hofanna in the highest."

To-day the patriarch Jacob keeps the feast in spirit, while he sees his prophecy brought actually to pass, when He that was to bind His foal to the vine rides Himself on a colt the foal of an ass ; and with the faithful he worships in spirit. To-day

is got ready the ass' colt of the silent example of nations once without understanding; in order to show forth the new people which is to be made subject unto God, from among all nations of the earth: and the children represent the childish ignorance of those nations as regards God. To-day the King of glory is glorified on earth prophetically, and He makes earthly creatures evidently partakers of the joys of heaven: to show that He is LORD of both, and that in each and in both He is praised in harmony together with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST. Those, therefore, that are above, making known the work of salvation that took place on earth, sang on their part: "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD God of hosts; the earth is full of His glory:" and those that are below, joining the throng of voices rejoicing in heaven, shouted: "Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna to the Son of David!" And the one band gave thanks: Blessed be the glory of the LORD from heaven;

while the other band spake of GOD, saying :
“ Blessed be He that cometh in the name
of the LORD !”

When all that took place, and while the disciples joined in the throng that rejoiced at all the wonders that were done, saying, “ Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD,” Glory to GOD in the highest, and on earth peace, the whole city was moved and said, Who is this? swayed by its blind hatred for the Master’s glory. But by city, understand the old, disorderly assembly of the synagogue. They ask in utter ignorance, Who is this? as if they had never seen Him Who went about doing good, the far-famed worker of miracles which GOD alone can work. So great was their darkness, that it could not receive the Light unapproachable that had shone forth in the midst of them. Wherefore Esaias cried before against them, saying : “ The deaf shall hear, and the blind shall look up to see.” But who is blind, if not my children? and who is deaf, but those

who rule over them ? And the servants of the LORD have become blind. Ye have often seen, but not noticed ; your ears have been opened, and ye have not heard.

Do you see, beloved, how exact are the prophet's words ? How the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD foreseeing things to come, through His saints, foretold those things as if they were present ? For those graceless men saw and touched Him, GOD, Who had worked all those miracles, and yet they remained in their unbelief. They saw him who was born blind, proclaiming Him LORD Who had restored to him his sight ; they saw the man sick of the palsy, who had been all his life bound and crippled with his sickness, being set free from it at the LORD's command. They beheld Lazarus escaping from the grave and death. They heard of the LORD walking on the sea ; of His making wine that had not grown out of the soil ; of the multitudes fed with bread without cost or trouble ; of devils being cast out, and of the healing of

the sick. Their public places proclaimed the tokens of His power; their ways announced His cures to the passers-by; the whole of Judea was full of His good deeds—and they asked, “Who is this?”

Oh, the folly of those falsely so-called teachers! Oh, the disobedient, the senseless elders! Oh, seed of the shameless Canaan, and not of Judah full of reverence! The children acknowledged their Creator, but the teachers said, “Who is this?” They that suck the breasts tell of God, and their elders blaspheme Him; the children sing praise unto Him with reverence and piety, and the profane priests revile Him impiously. O ye that will not yield to the sentiments of the righteous, turn your hearts to your own children. Learn the hidden things of God. What you see acted before your eyes bears witness, that He is God, and none else, Who is thus extolled by tongues untaught. “Search the Scriptures,” as ye have heard from the Master Himself, “for they are

they which testify of Him," and then ignore the wonder you behold !

Oh, ye thankless men, ye have heard the good news the prophet Zechariah brings you. For He says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Behold, thy King cometh to thee ; He is just and riding upon the foal of an ass." Why do ye refuse to rejoice ? Why do ye prefer darkness to the bright light of the sun ? Why do ye plot war against that perfect peace freely given you ? If so be ye are children of Zion, then join the throng of your children, and sing praises with them ; and let their worship of God be to you the first leading to joy. Learn of them Who it is that taught them, and that brought them together ; what is that teaching, what is this new knowledge of God, and old burden of the prophet.

If so be no man on earth taught them aught of all that, and they send forth a song of praise of their own, know that it is the work of God, as it is written in the

Law: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." Rejoice therefore doubly, that ye are the fathers of those who have been taught of God to send forth a hymn of praise and of blessing, that was unknown to their elders. Turn therefore your hearts to your children; and do not shut your eyes to the truth. If then ye be such, that hearing ye hear not and seeing ye see not, and you are referred in vain to your children, they will be your judges according to the saying of the SAVIOUR.

Well, in sooth, did the prophet Esaias exclaim of you beforehand, saying among other things: "Is not Jacob now ashamed, and does he not change his countenance? but when their children shall see My works, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob in me, and they will fear the God of Israel! And they that go astray in their spirit shall understand wisdom; they that murmur shall learn obedience; and the tongue of the stammerers shall learn to speak peace."

Seest thou, O foolish Jew, how from the very beginning of his love, the prophet prophesies shame to you because of your unbelief? learn, yea, even from him, how he proclaims the burst of praise of your children to be of God's teaching, as David the blessed exclaimed beforehand, saying: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." Now therefore either make the piety of the children your own, as it becomes you, or else grant us at all events, that our piety is just, and that the children were right in singing praise as they did. For our part, let us join in the throng with them and keep the feast with them, and sing together with a new language their heaven-taught song of praise.

Once the old man Simeon went to meet the SAVIOUR, and received in his arms as a babe the Master and LORD of ages, and proclaimed Him both GOD and LORD. Now, however, children, instead of indifferent elders, go forth to meet the SAVIOUR as Simeon did; they spread branches in-

stead of their arms, and they bless Him as LORD and GOD, who rides upon the foal of an ass as He does on the cherubim, saying : "Hosanna to the Son of David ; blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD." With whom let us all shout : Blessed be GOD of GOD, the King of Glory ; He Who made Himself poor among His own for our sake, that He might make us rich of His goodness : blessed is He that now cometh in humility, and that will again come in glory : at first meek and lowly riding upon an ass, and sung in triumph by children ; that the saying might be fulfilled : "Thy goings, O GOD, have been seen ; the ways of my GOD and King in the sanctuary." But the second time, in dreadful majesty on the clouds, escorted by angels and powers.

Oh ! for the sweet sound of the children's voice ! Oh ! for the genuine teaching of those who please GOD ! David in his prophecy hid his meaning under his writing ; but the children having opened the trea-

sure, offered its riches on their tongues, and in words full of grace they called aloud on every one to come and share it with them. Let us draw with them from the treasure that can never be taken from us; laying up the gift in our bosoms and in the recesses of hearts eager to possess it. Let us exclaim evermore: "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD;" He the true GOD, the Almighty from the Almighty, the SON coming in the Name of the FATHER, the True King from the True King, whose kingdom is like Him from everlasting, eternal; like Him of whom He is only-begotten. For the kingdom is one and the word of GOD does not ascribe honour to the SON out of that kingdom, neither beginning, nor increasing, nor yet growing less, GOD forbid! but inherent in His nature and truly His attribute in His own right and for ever. For there is one kingdom of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST; as there is one essence and one sovereignty. Wherefore

we offer one and the same service to the Three Persons of the Godhead, which is without beginning, uncreate, infinite, and without interruption. For the FATHER shall never cease to be FATHER, nor the SON to be SON and King: nor yet the HOLY GHOST to be what He is in His Person. Nothing in the TRINITY shall ever grow less, or lose its own eternity, or shall cease to form part of the Godhead, or to have the Kingdom. It is not because the SON of GOD was made man for our sake, and overcame our tyrant enemy, having worked out in the flesh this complete victory over the bitterest foe of our humanity, that He was made King; but because He is from all eternity both GOD and LORD, therefore is He also King, like Him who begat Him; both now, after His conception, and unto all eternity.

O thou heretic, do not blaspheme the Royalty of CHRIST, lest thou revile Him who begat Him. If thou be a true man, come forward honestly to CHRIST our own

True King, and no longer make thy freedom a cloak for thy wickedness. If thou art false, then yield thyself in fear subject to the Master. For the contentious is not kind, but openly evil-affected: as it is written: "He that honoureth not the SON, honoureth not the FATHER who hath sent Him."

Let us then, beloved brethren, come back to the place from whence we started, crying in so many words: "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD!" He the good and tender Shepherd, to lay down of His own accord His soul for His sheep. So that in like manner as those who will catch a wolf that feeds on sheep, allure him with one, He the Great Shepherd offered Himself as man to the spiritual and moral wolves that destroy the soul, that He might make them a prey for Adam who had once been waylaid and entrapped by them.

"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD!" He God against the devil;

not openly in His brilliant light which no one can approach unto ; but in the weakness of flesh, to bind our strong enemy.

“ Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD !” He the King against our tyrant foe ; not in the wisdom and majesty of His Almighty power, but through what is thought the foolishness of the Cross, to rob in His humility, the wary serpent of his prey.

“ Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD !” He the TRUE ONE against the Father of lies ; He the SAVIOUR against the destroyer ; He the PRINCE OF PEACE against him who causeth war ; He who loveth men, against him who hateth them.

“ Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD !” He the LORD, come to save man who had gone astray ; to put an end to his wanderings ; to bring to the light those that live in darkness ; to make the deceit of idols of none effect, and to bring in their stead a saving knowledge of God : to sanctify the world ; and to re-

move the guilt and abomination of a vain and empty worship.

“Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD.” The One for the many, to deliver the miserable race of man from the hand of hard taskmasters ; and the poor and needy from those who spoil him.

“Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD.” He, the good Samaritan, to pour wine and oil into the wounds of him who had fallen among thieves, and who was left to die uncared for.

“Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD,” to save us through Himself, as says the prophet. “It was not an elder, nor an angel, but the LORD Himself who saved us,” therefore do we bless Thee, O LORD, who with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, art blessed from everlasting and world without end ; from everlasting indeed, until now, ere Thou didst take a body like ours ; but from henceforth and for ever Thou art blessed in Thy Divine and indivisible humanity.

Let us see what follows. What says the holy Evangelist? When the LORD went into the Temple the blind and the lame came unto Him, and He healed them. And when the chief priests, and the Pharisees saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the Temple and saying: Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD; they were fore displeased at this mark of honour paid Him. So they came and said unto Him: Hearest Thou what these say? Art Thou not indignant at being praised and extolled as GOD? Art Thou not grieved at hearing those innocent creatures ascribing to Thee that which belongs to GOD alone? Has not GOD declared of old by the mouth of His prophet, that He will not give His honour to another? Adding, how dost Thou, being a man, make Thyself GOD?

But what did He reply to all those, He who is long suffering, abundant in mercy, and slow to anger? He bears with those

who rage against Him ; He meets their anger with patience ; He reminds them of the words of Scripture ; He brings forward the witness of what had actually taken place ; and does not shrink from their questions. Wherefore He says : " Have ye never heard Me speak by the mouth of the prophets ? for then you would know that I now present with you, am He that spake. Nor yet again ; " Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise, because of Thine enemies ; that Thou mayest still the enemy and the avenger ? " What manner of men are ye who keep to the law and read the prophets, and yet ignore and disregard Me whom the law and the prophets proclaim with one accord ? You would feign indeed under the pretence of respect for GOD to vindicate the glory due to Him, not knowing, that in fact, he that denieth Me denieth the FATHER also : for I came from GOD, and am come into the world. And My glory is the glory of MY FATHER."

Those foolish men being thus reprov'd by our GOD and SAVIOUR ceased indeed from gainfaying Him, their mouth being shut by the truth. But having devised another plan in their folly they took counsel against Him. But we will sing aloud: "Great is our LORD, and great is His power, and there is no end of His understanding."

All those things did happen, in order that the LAMB and SON of GOD who taketh away the sins of the world, should of His own will endure the sufferings which give us life; should be made known even in the hall of the Roman governor; that they who thought scorn of Him should value and sell for thirty pieces of silver the BLOOD that gives life unto the world; that CHRIST our Passover should be slain for us, so that those who are sprinkled with His precious Blood and sealed with it on their lips as on the door posts, should escape the shafts of the destroyer. And that CHRIST who suffered in the flesh, and rose again the third day,

should receive from the whole creation the same homage, the same honour and glory with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST. For unto Him every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and under the earth; praising and magnifying Him unto all ages, world without end. Amen.

ON MARY THE PENITENT.¹



RETHREN, come and let us seek mercy together while it is time. For in this passing world there is yet room for repentance and for mercy; but in the world that passes not, neither intreaties nor tears shall ever be heard.

It was by her tears that Mary the sinner tore asunder the hand-writing of her offences. Bring thy tears with thee, O sinner, and come near; cry unto the LORD with groans of anguish, and He will at once remit thee thy debt.

¹ Translated from the Syriac; S. Ephraem, Vol. III. Syr. Lat. p. 466.

My sins like roaring waves have overwhelmed me ; and I sink in them all day long. I cry unto Thee, O LORD ; Thou full of mercy and pity, help me that am ready to perish ; for my sins, like waters, are gone over my head.

Bring unto the LORD CHRIST, an offering of tears, O penitent, and smite upon thy breast, as the poor publican did, who said in sorrow of heart : O LORD ! have mercy on him who has incurred Thy wrath.

Behold, the door is opened and He looks upon thee, to see, O sinner, when thou wilt turn to Him. Turn and come to thy LORD, O sinner ! Forsake the ways of iniquity, and arise, run in the paths that lead thee to the Kingdom of God.

Alas ! how bitter the snare which my cruel enemy has set for me, with which he has hindered my goings and beset my paths. He has made me a poor wretched man that I am, for all the many sins I have done.

All my members tremble at the thought of the last judgment : for I have heard that

finners will be tried in the fire. Alas, for me, when I am tried in it ; for I have committed sins without number.

The plague of sin has spread over thee, O my soul ! If thou delayest, it will destroy thee altogether. Thy Physician is wise ; do show Him all thy wounds. Weep at His gate and lament ; and move Him to have pity on thee and to bind every one of them.

O Thou good Shepherd, who didst give Thy life for us ; and who hast suffered even unto the cross and unto death, in order to redeem me, deliver the soul of Thy servant from the multitude of his offences : and he will burst forth in praises and thanksgivings unto Thee, with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST.

The sea of my sins roars and troubles me ; and my reins within me tremble and quake with fear. What evil have I not done in my youth and in my old age ? O Thou who didst forgive the thief on the cross, forgive me also, all the offences I have

committed, and that are open and bare in Thy fight.

I received the talent of the priesthood ; but from idleness and sloth I hid it in the earth. Alas for me ! when He comes to ask for His right at the hands of me His slothful servant, who has not traded with His money nor added to it what interest He must require.

Whither shall I go from Thy presence ? where is the place in which I can hide myself from Thee ? My offences are many and my sins are increased. But give the word, O LORD, and then my offences will be blotted out, and my sins forgiven at Thy command.

Who is there that can help my weakness, if I do not come to CHRIST to be healed of my wounds ? Who is there like Him to bind the broken heart ? O Thou who healest sicknesses, heal also the soul wounded and defiled by sin.

Let Thy mercies, O LORD, come upon me, and deliver me, as Thou hast promised ;

let them be my help that I may bruise my enemies. For Thou art pitiful and gracious towards them that repent.

Support my weakness with Thine arm, O Thou great and high God! Let the wicked be ashamed in me, and be jealous of me when he sees me, and hide himself and flee from me, while I rise up to praise Thee, O GOD.

My wicked deeds have estranged me from Thee, O LORD. But hear, answer, and deliver me, as Thou didst hear, answer, and deliver Mary the sinner. Accept my tears as Thou didst her's, and forgive me my folly, which has been great and manifold.

O Thou Who openest the door to poor penitents, open also to me the door of Thy mercy, that I may come in and seek forgiveness of Thee: for my offences are multiplied. For Thou art well known as the only One propitiation for them all, O LORD.

Oh! may Thy Cross be to me the

raft¹ on which I may cross the waters of affliction, and come to Thee. Then shall I be satisfied with Thy brightness, and praise the mercies of Thy grace, that has had pity on me a sinner gone astray.

Accept the tears of my mean estate ; and grant me my request, O Most High. Blot out the hand-writing of my offences ; and write upon it my release : and let the wicked feel ashamed when he sees how Thy favour has blotted it out that it may never again be brought against me.

Let the abundant loving-kindnesses of Thy grace come to the relief of my infirmity ; that through them I may be delivered from the wicked who hates me ; then I shall pass on to the high places, and I shall be near Thee for ever.

O Thou Who hearest the voice of poor penitents, hearken unto the voice of my supplication, O LORD, and accept my repentance. Hear my requests and fulfil my

¹ Syr. *gisboro*, bridge.

prayers from the treasures of Thy grace ;
for it is at all times full of mercy and
loving-kindnesses.

And my poor sinful soul will praise Thee
with Thy FATHER and the HOLY GHOST ;
because she wept and was washed in tears
of repentance ; and found a temple and
abode on high in the eternal essence of her
Creator and her GOD.

ON PETER'S DENIAL OF HIS MASTER.¹

REPENTANCE met the renegade
disciple who had gone out, and
said to him : " Whither goest
thou from thy Master, Simon ? What place
will receive thee, and in what corner wilt
thou hide thyself ? "

And when he replied that he had estranged himself from his Master by denying Him, and had forfeited His love, Repentance gently drew nearer to Peter, and said to him : " Beware lest thou continue in

¹ Translated from the Syriac : S. Ephraem, Vol. III. Syr. and Lat. p. 434.

thy sin: and then really lose Him who loves thee,—CHRIST.

“I pledge myself that if thou wilt turn to Him, He will receive thee, and rejoice at thy coming. Come, draw near and say to Him with anguish of heart: O Shepherd that seekest the lost, seek Thy sheep that has gone astray, and find it!

“The plague of iniquity has spread over thee, and if thou delayest it will destroy thee whole. He is a wise and knowing Healer of sicknesses; show Him thy wounds; weep at His gate and lament; and move Him to pity till He binds thy wounds.”

Repentance having held and smitten him thus, and having moved him to tears, to an overflowing of thoughts within him, and to shed a flood of tears from a heart breaking with grief, Simon wailed and said: “Woe is me! that have been a hater of CHRIST, Who had made me the head of my fellow disciples, and gave me the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that I might open heaven, and bind or loose.

And after all that, I have denied Him !
Tremble, O earth, at an action so base.

“ Alas for me who, having forsaken
CHRIST, have none other like Him to go
to ! To whom shall I go, and who will
receive me ? Oh ! open to me Thy Beau-
tiful Gate that I may go in thereat, and
see Thee, and be refreshed with Thy Life !

“ Who will give me time enough to weep
and to lament ? What has happened to
my whole being ? I who yesterday was an
apostle, and am to-day a renegade ! I who
yesterday was the chief steward, and to-day
am an outcast who has denied his LORD !

“ Whom shall I find to heal my sickness
if I forsake CHRIST the Physician ever
ready to bind and to make whole ? Who
like Him has power to work ? O Thou
who once didst heal a woman of her plague,
heal a soul tainted with sin.

“ I am as Lazarus whom Thou didst
bring to life ; O LORD, bring me too from
the dead, as well as him. He was dead to
all ; I am dead in the depth of my heart.

O Thou who didst raise him with a word,
make me also this day to rise again into
newness of life !

“In Lazarus it was only the body that
decayed ; but in me both the soul and the
body are diseased. O LORD, restore to life
both my body that is decayed, and my
soul that is lost. Only speak the word ; all
things are easy to Thee.

“When I sank in the sea I cried unto
Thee for help, and Thou didst hold out
Thy hand to draw me out of the deep
waters. Now deliver me who, on land am
overwhelmed and ready to perish through
my denial of Thee.

“Whither shall I go and hide myself, if
Thou shuttest Thy door in my face ? I
have no other Master but Thee. Do not
cast me away from Thy presence ; for my
hope is in Thee alone. O spare me and
have mercy on me.”

Repentance offered the true and bitter
tears of Simon to the Judge and said :
“Simon the sinner brings these to Thee.

In him Thou seest a pattern of penitents, who like him weep and turn to Thee.

“The tears of Simon shall be a mirror in which other penitents may look ; every one who sins will weep as he wept ; that he too may, like Simon, rejoice in the state of those sinners that repent of their sins.”

“Woe is me ! woe is me !” cried Simon, all that night ; “for my whole course from my youth up until now, is all to no purpose ! O LORD, my LORD, have mercy on me !” So cried and wept Simon Peter, and intreated GOD with tears, and said : “Oh ! that I had never denied Thee, who knowest all hidden and secret things ! woe is me, O my Master ! for I have denied Thee, and am like the traitor Judas.

“Draw me after Thee to Thy fold ; I am the sheep that is gone astray in the world ; I will run after Thee ; for I long to hear Thy voice ; yea, let me be that one sheep out of a hundred which was found when it was lost.

“Then Gabriel and the whole assembly

of Thy holy angels, will rejoice, and sing praises unto Thee, as unto the Good Shepherd; because Thou hast brought back on Thy shoulders the one sheep that was lost, to keep it safe for ever.

“Thy love is better than wine; and Thy loving-kindness is better than ten thousand chosen ones. We are blessed in the wine, the Cup of Thy Blood, by which we receive a new life; and the upright praise Thy loving mercy.

“Behold, I was sad and cast down by my sins; but my beauty has returned to me through repentance. Baptism had removed the taint¹ of my birth, but I have been washed, I have been made clean and again acceptable unto God; and repentance has clothed me with a beautiful garment. I was clad in mourning; but now I have on a brilliant cloak of gladness and of joy.”

¹ Syr. ‘odious colour.’

HOMILY OF S. SEVERIAN,

BISHOP OF EMESA,

*On the Sufferings and Death of our Lord.*¹

BRETHREN, we cannot hold our peace on the sufferings of CHRIST; we must speak of them; for both the time and place constrain us to do so. For, since He died for us, shall we not tell of His Passion? Yea, rather, we will dwell on it, and proclaim it aloud. He is on the Cross, for thy sake, O sinner; and thou, be at His feet, for thy own sake also. Thou

¹ Translated from the Armenian. Homil. of S. Severian, ed. Venice, p. 428.

darest not think or say nothing of thy LORD's sufferings; for where He suffered, there Satan died.

The traitor is come to look about him; and when come, he is on the alert and ready, not in places unknown, but in a spot which he knows full well. That place is near you. But what is meant by 'near you?' To that very place which you yourselves had shewn to others is the traitor come, bringing with him a crowd; as if much people could overrule the power of God! The devil's son is come with swords, that are the wiles of his father who came to Adam as a friend, while he acted by him as an enemy: for he deceived and overcame him like a man that was taken in. And here he hid his guile under a kifs; although he remonstrated when his friendship was doubted. Did he come to betray with a kifs? No; he came not to kifs, but to betray. I resist not, said the LORD; do what thou listest: thou alone art the cause of thy own destruction. That was to the

traitor himself; but to those who came to lay hands on Him, He said: What seek ye? They answered: JESUS of Nazareth. And the LORD replied: I am He; I resist you not, I flee not from you; for this very purpose am I come, and to this end was I born. But while He spake they and the traitor fell backwards to the earth; to show that He had come there of His own accord, for if they could not stand His speaking to them, how could they have bound Him against His will? "If ye seek Me," said the LORD, "let these go their way."

But Peter, who was the most fervent of all the disciples, comes forward also on this occasion. For at times he stepped rightly before the others; at other times it was very much as he thought best himself. He who knew how to come out of the ship boldly and walk on the water to his LORD, he who believed fervently, nevertheless suddenly fell back. But that was ere he was made a Rock, and ere he had received of the Spirit. For when once he had received

the Spirit, he no longer quailed before a maid, nor shook in the wind ; but he abode unmoved and faithful in the place in which he was put. Do not find fault with me, brethren, if I gather, one by one, every merit of our LORD ; while I endeavour as well as I can, to tell His virtues. I pray you, do not grow weary ; for I tell you of the Cross.

Peter drew his sword, which the LORD bade him take with him in order to fulfil every particular dispensation connected with His humanity ; according to what S. Luke declares, that this saying should be fulfilled, "He was reckoned among the transgressors ;" a saying which the other Evangelists apply to CHRIST on the Cross.¹ He cut off the servant's ear, well and deservedly ; for the ear that hears not, ought not to remain in its place. But the LORD showed kindness even then to those who laid hands on

¹ S. Luke and S. Mark alone mention it. Compare S. Luke xxii. 37, with S. Mark xv. 28.

Him ; for although He healed the servant's ear by a miracle, yet He did not hinder their hands from taking Him. Having bound Him they led Him away captive, that the prophecy of Esaias should not come false, which said, that " He was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter." The Jews were pleased at His being taken ; and the traitor rejoiced as if he had done a good work.

Peter then follows to see the end, full of doubt and forethought on the denial his LORD had foretold him should take place. He had been told that he would deny Him ; and he repelled that, saying, he would never do so. His readiness was both good and becoming ; but it was ignorance on his part : for he did not know how far he was about to show himself weak and mean. He follows anxiously and doubting : full of misgivings : his heart beating all the while. He meets the maid, who says to him : " Art thou not a Galilean also ?" But Peter denies, and declares he is not. Yet that denial was not without meaning in one who

was to be witness of his LORD's Resurrection. For if He who had died, was dead and not alive, then why should Peter think it fitting that he should be crucified with his head downwards for One who was dead?¹ Then Peter moves further, goes from his place, but not from his denial. When about to speak, so troubled is he as to wish to change his language. "Thou art a Galilean, says the maid." Nay; I am not a Galilean, says Peter, with a lip that betrays him. Yet see how he who was thus troubled in his speech by an ignorant maid, afterwards persuaded even Roman orators. But we will presently speak of the Resurrection; meanwhile let us tell more about the Cross.

¹ This, as everybody knows, has reference to the tradition received in the Eastern and Western Churches respecting the Martyrdom of S. Peter. There is at Rome, outside the gates, on the Appian way, a church dedicated to him, and called *Domine quo vadis?* the words S. Peter addressed to our LORD whom he is said to have met at the place on which the church is built, when he was fleeing from persecution. There was something inexpressibly solemn about that spot the last time I saw from it the sun set over the beautiful meadows of the Sabines.

The high priests, servants by birth, sat in council, and the Judge of all stood before them as a servant. The lawyers themselves who had not learned the law, asked Him : Art Thou the SON of GOD ? like the devil, of whom the LORD had said before, that he was their father. " I adjure Thee, said the high priest, tell me if Thou be the SON of the living GOD." Not that he cared to know it ; but he wished to destroy Him. Then they brought the King of the judge before that judge. He stood before him " like a sheep before his shearer," as Esaias says. The judge trembled ; not so the accusers. They say : " He maketh Himself a King," that His sentence might be irrevocable. Then the wife of the judge, who had suffered in a dream because of Him, sends a message to her husband ; he was better disposed than the rest, he even wished not to kill Him, but to release Him, and he commanded Him to be scourged, in order to allay their fury ; thus fulfilling the saying of the prophet : " With His stripes we are

healed." But they cried with one voice : " Away with Him, away with Him, and crucify Him ;" that might be fulfilled what was said of the LORD : " He lifted up his voice against Me."

What crime could the Jews bring against Him? What blind man was there that had not received sight, or lame that had not walked? May be some of those that had once been healed by Him, were among them who then railed at Him. No doubt many whose tongue He had loosed, cried against Him to please the Jews. I trow that of them was said : " What could be done to My vineyard that I have not done to it? I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and behold, it hath brought forth wild grapes." Pilate grew weary of denying the Jews their request; but he was overcome by those shameless miscreants. He washed his hand, because he had not soiled it: but they cried, that His blood might be on them and on their children. If what they at first required had not been

done, then He would neither have been put to death nor risen again. While they prevailed in their impious intreaties, while they raged in their savage fury, and the judge refused to give way to their wickedness, they brought to pass and fulfilled the truth of the prophet's words who, because he knew beforehand the malice of the Jews, foretold that the Anointed of the LORD should suffer at their hands. Pilate wished to stop their evil deeds, but he could not.

JESUS went forth out of the city, bearing Himself the Tree of His own Cross; like another Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice. Will anyone say that this was done without purpose? The daughters of Jerusalem wept on that occasion, not knowing over whom they would have to weep. "Weep over yourselves and your children," said the LORD, "and not over Me, for I am now fulfilling that which I chose of Mine own free will." And they would weep hitherto if He whom the Jews did

away with was not risen again from the dead. But now let us speak with joy of our salvation. JESUS went forth and walked between malefactors ; that it might be fulfilled, " He was reckoned among the transgressors." He who only did good, our SAVIOUR and our LORD, went forth among thieves and finners.

And now the day of His crucifixion, was the day of Adam's transgression. God created Adam on the sixth day ; and on that day he transgressed. On that day too JESUS became obedient and endured His sufferings at the sixth hour, when Adam tasted of the fruit ; that we should overcome in CHRIST at the same hour that we were overwhelmed in Adam. The Tree of Life in the Garden, is the Tree of the Cross. There was a woman, through whom sin came into the world ; here is a virgin who heard Him say : " Behold thy mother." On that day Adam put forth his hand for evil ; and JESUS spread His holy arms for our good. Adam drew near to

the tree ; and JESUS laid His hands and His feet on the Tree to which they were fastened with nails. Adam tasted of the fruit through lust ; and JESUS tasted of vinegar mingled with bitter gall. Adam heard this sentence : The earth shall bring forth to thee thorns and thistles. Our JESUS of His own will was crowned with the thorns of Adam. Adam brought down a curse upon himself ; but JESUS who is blessed by them that are condemned, was hanged on the Tree as one accursed.

We run as it were in a race ; one on the right, the other on the left ; for the types given by Moses are complete and realifed. For as he went up the mountain at the time when the people of God was fighting with Amalek, and Joshua the Son of Nave, as leader, held out his rod in his hand, he showed beforehand the figure of the Cross, with his arms and his rod. There Hur and Aaron, one on the right hand of Moses, and the other on the left ; and here two thieves, one on the right and the other on

the left of JESUS. And why thieves? that thou mayest know, O sinner, that His sufferings were for such as thou art. One reviled; but the other blessed.

And what didst thou see, O thief, or rather, O thou bringer of glad tidings to us? Neither a sign nor a miracle. He is nailed to the Cross as well as thou; and He tastes of gall which thou hast not drunk. He is crowned with thorns, which thou hast not worn. Then one reviled and would not learn of his fellow. What seest thou? A Man hanging on the Cross and the scorn of His foes, and thou sayest: "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." What! dost thou call Him LORD who is thus hanging on the Cross, sentenced to it by His Judges; and is He a Judge who is thus condemned? Thou didst feel and acknowledge that He was crucified for sinners, and was doing His utmost to give life to those that were lost: for He is the Lamb slain and offered in sacrifice for many. What then dost thou ask, O thou believer,

and no longer thief?—That Thou wouldst remember me in Thy kingdom. Thou askest a thing that is far and distant, but I will give it thee at once. Thou hast not been slow in believing; and I will not withhold My grace: to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise. So that he really rose to Paradise, who was about to descend into hell to which he was doomed. And why this day? Because while on this day Adam was driven from Paradise, at this hour the thief opened it and went into it. And from the hour at which Adam ate of the fruit of the garden until he left it, Jesus remained on the Cross, until He fulfilled the spreading of Moses' hands towards heaven. "They pierced My hands and My feet," according to the saying of David. Gall in the cup is offered because of Adam's lust to Him Who is crowned with thorns. • In order that the adversary should be put to shame, He carried the conquest of His enemy as far as the Cross, and endured patiently his infamous treatment.

But in like manner as the heavens showed the place of the Nativity by means of a brilliant star in the East, so also they made known how they mourned for the sufferings of CHRIST, by withholding the light of the sun, in order to hide the fury and audacity of His enemies. The light hid itself for three hours, as long as the Sun of Righteousness remained on the Cross and in sufferings; afterwards the sun re-appeared, lest they might think night had arrived. But the sun did not shrink from being darkened; it hid itself three hours in order to represent as it were the stay of the Son of Man for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and His appearing again. When the heavens withheld their light and gave it back they proclaimed a miracle; and the earth shook at the sight it could not bear. For it was fitting and becoming all creation to bear witness of Him Who was suffering on the Cross. And the bosom and bars of the earth were torn asunder in order to receive Him Who was free among the dead.

The types and examples of Joseph the patriarch, as handed down by the ancient Jews, were realised in the SON Who was betrayed to death by them, and dwells for ever with His FATHER.

Let us then abide by JESUS who endures Agony for our sake. At the foot of His Cross thieves were crucified with Him, as being necessary to the fulfilment of the dispensation, that we might learn how men do die, and how GOD was separated from him by His will and not without it. Those who were subject to the law of nature had their legs broken, that they should endure death according to that nature. But He who had power to lay down His life and power to take it again in like manner as He took of His own will and not against it, a body out of the Virgin, also of His own accord and not otherwise made on the Cross, a separation between His Spirit and His body. "FATHER, in Thy hands I commit My Spirit:" not in the hands of the wicked who reviled and reproached Him on all

fides. This is a great wonder : for He died willingly and not unwillingly ; and there need not of necessity be any pain connected with it, for when He will, He gives up His Spirit.

He is then in every respect the One Only-begotten ; for as He alone was begotten of the FATHER, and He alone was born of the Virgin according to the flesh, so also in death, He dies of His own will and not otherwise. Those who heard this could hardly believe it, and they asked ; Can a man give up the ghost when he likes, of his own will ? So that one of the soldiers who could not believe that He was already dead, made a gash in His side with a spear, and some in wonder said : “ Of a truth He was the SON of GOD.” But why did he not pierce with his spear the heart or other parts near it ? Because it was where the serpent hid his fangs. For Eve was taken from Adam’s side, and he who wishes to heal the bite of the serpent, must cut the part in which the venom lies. It

was therefore fitting and right that one side should be wounded for another ; that the saying might come true ; “ All things concerning Me have an end.”

Mark also the day : for when the days of unleavened bread, then also the passover of sufferings ; and when the Lamb, then also Him that is without blemish and without spot. If the reckoning of days does not exactly fit, care not for it ; for the Church makes no mistake in her reckoning, but the Jews have altered their own. This day was the death of death, and the destruction of sin : this day was the sacrifice offered for the propitiation of our sins, but the shame of our foe. This was the beginning of our life, the signal of victory over the great adversary. But of that death no one doubts ; for all admit and confess it. The Gentiles ridicule it ; the Jews say : we put Him to death. But they will bear the doom they have brought down upon themselves ; while the Church rejoices in JESUS CHRIST our LORD ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

TO THE LORD JESUS.¹



JESUS, our LORD and KING, to whom all worship belongs! Thou Who through Thy Passion hast overcome our cruel tyrant, death; O SON of GOD! who hast promised us a new life and a kingdom on high;—thwart all devices of the devil intended against us; and send upon us Thy peace and Thy loving-kindnesses: so that on the day of Thine appearing we may go forth to meet Thee, and be found according to Thy will well-pleasing unto Thee.

¹ Translated from the Syriac of S. Ephraem, Exh. lxx. Vol. III. Syr. Lat. p. 540.

We will sing Hosannas in praise of Thy name, for Thy great kindness to our race ; for wonderful have been Thy mercies to our mortal nature ; and Thy love for us oppresses our souls.

Oh ! cover our sins with Thy forgiving love that we may praise Thy Name for all the good we have received at Thy hands. And of Thy goodness, O LORD, make us all worthy to praise and to worship Thy Divinity : and that our eyes which now see Thy glory, may see Thy great grace and pity at that day.

Grant that they who hear the voice of Thy answer to their prayers, may not hear Thy voice in severity to them. Grant that the voices which praise Thee in Thy Church, may also sing Thy glory in Heaven ; and that the tongues that shout unto Thee, Holy ! Holy ! may for ever be given to praise Thy holy name. Grant that the hands which have held Thy Body and Blood may receive from Thee the remission of their sins ; that the feet which have

trodden Thy holy courts may one day walk in the Land of Life. Shed abroad abundantly Thy riches over the whole assembly of those who worship Thee as God; and may Thy great love abide with us; to the increase and praise of Thy glory.

Oh! open Thy door to the prayers of us all, and let our service of Thee be acceptable in Thy sight. Let Thy mercy send us prosperity and drive all our sorrows from us. Then we will sing praises without ceasing unto Thee, as unto the FATHER, and to the HOLY GHOST, world without end. Amen.

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